

If you live in Sonoma Valley or the surrounding hills, then you know how lucky we are to live in this spectacular natural landscape, with pastoral Sonoma Mountain on the west and the rugged, forested Mayacamas to the east. And we also have the good fortune of having great neighbors: deer browsing at dawn, coyotes loping by at dusk, acorn woodpeckers storing acorns in tall trees and hawks soaring overhead. Some property values are hard to quantify; having the wild beauty and wildlife of Sonoma County at our doorstep is one of those values.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT** there are some easy things that you, as a resident of this valley, can do to support the native wildlife that live and travel through this beautiful region?

# PROTECT THE SONOMA VALLEY WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

SINCE 1976, SONOMA LAND TRUST HAS PROTECTED NEARLY 50,000 ACRES OF BEAUTIFUL, PRODUCTIVE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT LAND IN AND AROUND SONOMA COUNTY.



## SONOMA VALLEY WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

HELPING SONOMA VALLEY'S WILDLIFE **THRIVE**



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It is not by chance that the Sonoma Valley area is popular with wild animals. We live in what is known as a “wildlife corridor.” Wildlife corridors are bands of habitat that are large and intact enough that they provide animals with an important bridge between larger blocks of habitat. The “Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor” stretches from Sonoma Mountain, east across the valley floor, to the crest of the Mayacamas Mountains. This corridor links the large block of high-quality habitat on the Marin Coast to the expanse of wildlands in the Blue Ridge—Berryessa region of eastern Napa County.

Numerous lush creeks thread through our lands, and many animals and fish travel alongside and through these waterways, enjoying the food, water, easy passage and cover they provide. Some of these creeks also provide important feeding and breeding habitat for federally threatened steelhead trout.

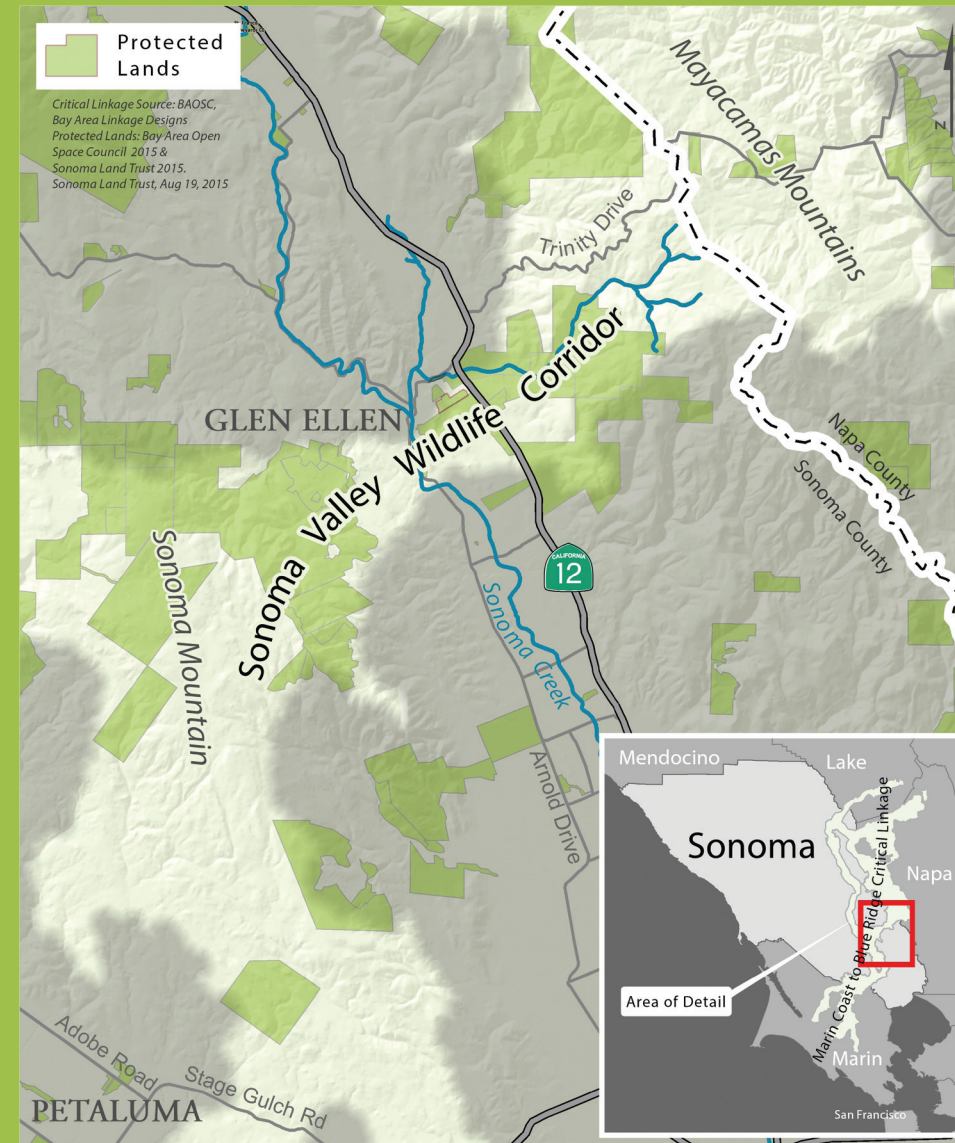
Larger animals, like bear, mountain lion and deer, need wildlife corridors to survive, as do smaller creatures, such as fox, squirrel and kingsnake. They give animals the space they need to find food, water, shelter and mates, and successfully raise their young. These wildlife corridors are increasingly important in the face of climate change: They provide animals with the room they need to adapt and shift to changes in temperature, vegetation and water availability.

## STRIKING A BALANCE

The world-class scenery of Sonoma Valley, with its forested hills, meandering creeks, open grasslands and oak woodlands, is attractive to humans and wildlife alike. However, not all species are capable of successfully running the gauntlet of human development.

While nearly 6,000 acres within the corridor are permanently protected for conservation purposes by state and county agencies and private nonprofit organizations, the corridor is increasingly hemmed in by residential and agricultural development. On the valley floor, near the town of Glen Ellen, the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor becomes a particularly tight squeeze for wildlife, narrowing to just three-quarters of a mile wide. While many wildlife species are still able to move through the corridor, it is at risk of becoming a roadblock rather than a thoroughway.

Even seemingly minor human activities can have profound effects on wild animals. For example, fences can cut off preferred routes of travel, and some species avoid areas with nighttime lights or heavily used trails. The good news is that there are several easy things we all can do to “keep the road open.” It’s up to all of us who live and play in the beautiful, biologically rich Sonoma Valley to help keep our corridor accessible to all wildlife in the region, from the Coast fence lizard to the bobcat.



### WHAT DO WILDLIFE CORRIDORS NEED TO BE FUNCTIONAL?

- **High-quality habitat:** sufficient food, water and cover for safety
- **Variety of habitats,** including forest, shrubland and grassland; well-vegetated and free-flowing streams
- **Few barriers to movement,** such as human development and intrusive activities
- **Sufficient length and width** to accommodate the wide range of species in the region



## HOW TO HELP PROTECT THE SONOMA VALLEY WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

**MAINTAIN NATURAL VEGETATION AND HABITATS, ESPECIALLY IN UNDEVELOPED AREAS.** Avoid conversion of land within wildlife corridors to intensive agricultural or recreational uses that will displace wildlife movement to inhospitable areas, particularly where corridor width becomes less than 1.5 miles.

**LIMIT FENCING AND USE WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY FENCE DESIGNS.** Fencing can injure and even kill wild animals by blocking them out of their habitat and trapping them in a place where they are unsafe. Remove unnecessary fencing, especially near watercourses and ridgelines that funnel wildlife movement. New and replacement fences should only be installed when necessary and should utilize wildlife-friendly designs. All fences should be well maintained to avoid animal entanglement in loose wires.

**BE FIRE-SAFE AND WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY.** Mowing and clearing large areas can reduce the cover that animals need to pass through an area safely. Many species will avoid open areas with few places to hide. Meet, but do not exceed, the defensible space requirements of CalFire and local fire authorities to keep wildlife habitat intact.

**LANDSCAPE WITH DROUGHT-RESISTANT NATIVE PLANTS.** Native plants require significantly less water, are more beneficial for native bees and butterflies, help minimize weed expansion and often provide better cover for passing wildlife.

**MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE NATIVE VEGETATION ALONG CREEKS.** Well-developed vegetation along waterways protects and improves water quality while providing habitat and protection for most wildlife species in the region.

**DO NOT ALLOW PETS TO ROAM FREELY ON WILD LANDS.** Dogs and cats are known to chase and prey upon wildlife — and vice-versa in some cases — and their scents and sounds cause some wild species to avoid an area. Keeping pets under control during the day and indoors at night provides greater freedom for wild animals to pass by and also reduces the chance of pets being harmed. Ideally, house cats should be kept indoors at all times. Also, keep pet food indoors so that wild animals are not drawn close to houses where conflicts may arise.

**MINIMIZE OUTDOOR NIGHT LIGHTING AND EXCESSIVE NOISE.** Some animals avoid or become disoriented in lighted areas, increasing the likelihood of mortality. Outdoor lighting should be limited to the minimum needed for safety, restricted to within 50 feet of structures, pointed to the ground rather than out or up, illuminate only the structure or immediate area of need and be the lowest wattage to achieve the purpose. Amplified sound should not be heard past the developed zone around buildings.

**DO NOT USE PESTICIDES.** Pesticide use in and around houses in natural areas poses a risk to both native plants and animals. These poisons often kill or injure non-target animals and also remain in the environment, killing more than the targeted species when poisoned animals are later consumed by other wildlife. Application of herbicides may be necessary to control invasive weedy plants, but their use should be limited.

**TIMBER HARVESTING SHOULD BENEFIT WILDLIFE CORRIDOR HABITAT.** Timber harvesting should be limited and, where undertaken, shrubs and trees of various sizes should remain in sufficient number to maintain habitat diversity. Standing or downed dead trees should be left in place as wildlife habitat where permissible and safe.

**LIMIT THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ROADS.** Roads and driveways pave over habitat and impede wildlife movement through the corridor, so the construction of new roads should be minimized. Busy public roads should incorporate crossing structures to accommodate the safe passage of wildlife and reduce vehicle collisions.

For more information on things you can do to help wildlife on your property, please see our *Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor Project: Management and Monitoring Strategy* at [www.sonomalandtrust.org/Wildlife-Strategy.pdf](http://www.sonomalandtrust.org/Wildlife-Strategy.pdf).

