

The Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership brings parties together to conserve natural resources, protect working lands, and preserve the mission of Fort Huachuca in Cochise, Santa Cruz, and Pima counties, Arizona. This article introduces work on wildlife corridors in this area.

Animals need safe routes to travel to new territories or find food or mates. Where roads, development, and fences chop up landscapes, connected habitat can be in short supply, especially for large, wide-ranging mammals. Providing connectivity and permeability is critically important to sustaining wildlife populations.

The Sentinel Landscape is home to efforts aimed at maintaining passages between mountain ranges, through valleys, and across major barriers, like highways. These projects protect known routes rather than untested pathways. The Arizona Game and Fish Department and Arizona Department of Transportation have worked statewide with land managers, universities, and non-profits to map, design, and secure such corridors. The Nature Conservancy has long partnered with private land owners, Fort Huachuca, and others to keep corridors open throughout the Sentential area. Organizations working on corridor projects welcome volunteers.

Mountain-to-mountain

Borderlands Restoration (borderlandsrestoration.org) is protecting a corridor between the Santa Rita and Patagonia Mountains. The organization is raising money to set aside areas for animal movement within a former subdivision. Borderlands works with the community to integrate human activities into corridor design.

Cross-valley

The Arizona Antelope Foundation (AAF – azantelope.org) has modified 60 miles of fencing on private property and along state highway right-of-ways in the Sonoita Valley to ease passage of pronghorn antelope. Unlike deer, antelope travel under rather than over fences. Raising and replacing bottom strands of barbed wire with smooth wire reconnects habitat patches and allows pronghorn to travel long distances.

Cross-highway

Roads, from dirt two-tracks to interstate highways, are formidable barriers to animals of all sizes and huge sources of mortality. Sky Island Alliance (SIA – skyislandalliance.org) has been tracking area wildlife since 2001. Knowing where animals travel allows planning for highway crossings such as at Davidson Canyon which connects the Sentinel area to the Rincon Mountains to the north. SIA works with the Arizona Department of Transportation on crossings and helps federal land managers close unneeded roads for the benefit of wildlife.

Riparian

Ribbons of habitat along streams are important routes for all kinds of animals. On the Sentinel Landscape, the Bureau of Land Management San Pedro Riparian National Conservation area and other protected reaches of river to the north provide a swath of wildlife super highway (and super habitat) from the border to the Gila River. The Bureau of Land Management Las Cienegas National Conservation area protects the upper reaches of Cienega Creek, and many parties work to keep the Sonoita Creek corridor barrier-free. The Coronado National Forest and Cascabel Conservation Association are stewards for canyons whose streams connect valleys with mountains.

Sentinel Landscape itself, is a giant corridor between the Mexican Sierra Madre to the south and the Rocky Mountains to the north. Bears, mountain lions, deer, and smaller animals once freely crossed the region as part of their continent-wide distribution. Fencing on the international border is a major barrier, though currently passages exist. Keeping the Sentinel Landscape's wide open spaces abundant will help maintain plentiful wildlife. Occasional jaguar and ocelot sightings are testament to successful efforts to keep large swaths of natural landscape connected.



SIA Remote Camera

Large mammals particularly benefit from connecting large swaths of habitat.



B. Dickens



J. Milligan

AAF volunteers replace and raise bottom strands of barbed wire to prevent fences from becoming barriers to pronghorn.

Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape

Wildlife Corridors

For decades, people have worked together to protect precious natural and cultural features of southeastern Arizona's sky island region. In 2015, the Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership came together with an added twist—preserving the electromagnetically quiet area for the U.S. Army's Fort Huachuca Buffalo Soldier Electronic Test Range. The **Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership** conserves grasslands and forests that provide habitat, water, livelihoods, and recreation in Cochise, Pima, and Santa Cruz counties, Arizona.

This "working landscape" hosts world-class biodiversity and offers recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. The diverse partnerships dedicated to maintaining these riches are made up of landowners, concerned citizens, scientists, and staff of local, state, and federal governments. This piece highlights some of the projects that maintain wildlife corridors in the Sentinel area.

Corridor Project Examples

Antelope-friendly fencing (barrier removal), Davidson Canyon Wildlife Corridor (safe highway crossing), Patagonia Wildlife Corridor (protecting routes between mountain ranges), Riparian Corridors (ribbons of habitat with food and water).

