



Energy Blog

How Wildlife Bridges are transforming how Californians interact with the Environment (P 1 of 3)

Over the past year, Community Action Partnership of Orange County (CAP OC) has been committed to sharing information on climate change and environmental issues. This is because CAP OC recognizes climate change is indiscriminate and will affect all of us, regardless of sex, race, class, gender and age. CAP OC is committed to providing readers with information on how our various programs can help mitigate the worst effects of climate change, such as extreme heat and weather patterns.

CAP OC also recognizes that this information can be bleak, which is why we are taking this month to celebrate climate positives. This month's series will highlight climate victories, innovative approaches to building sustainable communities and other amazing things climate activists are doing to fight against climate change. We hope that this blog series will close out an eventful year and bring a bit of hope into your lives.

Over the past couple of years, you have probably seen or heard stories on the news about wildlife causing trouble amongst residential neighborhoods. From bears to mountain lions, to deer and raccoons, wildlife doesn't abide to human life. What we recognize as our normal environment (a suburban neighborhood or an urban city) are foreign to animals.

Before freeways and towns covered most of Southern California, wildlife lived

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relatively undisturbed, being able to freely roam and migrate to and from their natural habitats. Nowadays, most wildlife avoid human-populated areas, but it is not unusual to hear stories of deer or other wildlife being struck by vehicles on highways. According to Environment America, “it’s estimated that there are more than 7,000 wildlife collisions per year, leading to more than 400 human injuries” in California alone. This unfortunate circumstance is known as habitat fragmentation, which occurs when large areas of habitats are split into smaller patches that are potentially isolated from one another. Habitat fragmentation is a growing danger to animals and plants around the world.

This has led to conservationists and environmentalists alike to advocate for the state to build what are known as “wildlife bridges.” A wildlife corridor is a strip of land that helps connect groups of animals that are separated. When humans change the land, these corridors link protected areas so animals can move safely between them, even across places that people have disturbed. In California, the California Department of Transportation, also known as Caltrans, has taken the lead in researching, identifying and constructing these wildlife bridges. Caltrans has been building them across various freeways that are known to cut through wildlife habitats.

In Northern California, a couple miles north of Weed, CA on Highway 97. According to the Caltrans website, construction for this project is expected to be completed by 2026. Another wildlife crossing you may have heard about is the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing over the 101 Freeway, across Liberty Canyon. This bridge was constructed as a result of the incredible story of P-22, a mountain lion who successfully crossed two freeways to reside in Griffith Park. Sadly, P-22 has since passed, but his story is what led to the construction of the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife. This bridge “will eventually link the Santa Monica Mountains to the Simi Hills, reconnecting an ecosystem that has long been fragmented by a major freeway,” according to NPR news.

Wildlife bridges are just one step in many conservation efforts to continue to live in harmony with wildlife. This reimagining of urban design (e.g. freeways) has opened

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the door for more sustainable urban development, creating a future in which cities can live harmoniously with wildlife.

Sources:

- (1) [An elk bridge in Northern California](#)
- (2) [The legacy of Hollywood mountain lion P-22 lives on in wildlife conservation efforts](#)
- (3) [US-101 – Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing at Liberty Canyon](#)
- (4) [Caltrans paves the way for safe wildlife crossings](#)
- (5) [Why are Wildlife Corridors so Important for Conservation?](#)