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## Survey details threats to corridors linking wildlife habitats

By Andrew Bridges  
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) --  
Development severely threatens  
59 percent of California's wildlife  
corridors, the natural pathways  
traveled by the the state's native  
species, a study released Monday  
found.

The 79-page study by a coalition  
of environmental and government  
groups, identified 232 migration  
corridors used by the state's  
mammals, birds, fish, amphibians  
and reptiles.

A majority of the routes are  
threatened by human activity. A  
single highway, dam or  
subdivision can choke off the links  
between areas that have already

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been preserved. A full 14 percent of the corridors identified in the survey have already been erased by development.

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Corridors are vital for the long-term survival of species such as Chinook salmon, bighorn sheep and bald eagles, scientists said. In California, many of those animals live on isolated preserves hemmed in by development.

"Wildlife corridors are an essential component of any conservation strategy on the basis that the natural habitats have been fragmented," said Paul Spitler, executive director of the California Wilderness Coalition.

The Davis-based group co-sponsored the study with The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Geological Survey, Center for the Reproduction of Endangered Species and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The hope is to influence state conservation policy, which has traditionally focused on core habitat areas but not on the links that join them.

The survey -- said to be the first to cover an entire state -- underscores the importance of corridors in preserving genetic diversity and the sustainability of wildlife populations, scientists said.

M.A. Sanjayan, director of conservation science for The Nature Conservancy, said the situation is most dire in Southern California, where 80 percent of the corridors are threatened by encroaching development.

Preserving the corridors can be as simple and cheap as tucking a culvert under a highway project or as complicated and expensive as securing and preserving land slated for development, Spitler said.

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