

## **WILDLIFE MOVEMENT THROUGH SONOMA VALLEY**

The following selected excerpts are from “Watching Wildlife Move Through Sonoma Valley”  
by **Sabine Bergmann**

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<https://baynature.org/article/watching-wildlife-move-through-sonoma-valley/>

The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor (Corridor), encompassing approximately 10,000 acres, stretches from Sonoma Mountain eastward across Sonoma Creek and the valley floor, and continues to the crest of the Mayacamas Mountains.

Animals have “preferred habitats, which offer the resources they need to survive, like food, water, and mates.” Corridors provide that access. Without them, “animal populations can suffer from dwindling food stocks, competition for limited territory, and inbreeding. What’s more, wildlife with fewer options to move has fewer options to adapt to intensifying climate change.”

The corridors are “critical linkages that allow wildlife to move between undeveloped areas. These corridors facilitate the movement of all kinds of life, including: mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish, invertebrates, and even plants. The **Sonoma Valley wildlife corridor** is one of those linkages.”

The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor Project kicked off in 2013. Pathways for Wildlife, a research organization focused on wildlife connectivity, partnered with Sonoma Land Trust on a highway underpass study and discovered a staggering amount of wildlife moving through underpasses.” Underpasses are used by the animals to traverse roads.

Study results showed, “The amount of movement and biodiversity is tremendous. It yielded 8,949 detections of animals at just nine culverts and underpasses along the valley floor. A series of 44 cameras caught thousands of wildlife snapshots during the two years of the study. The animals most frequently observed were black-tailed deer, wild turkey, and western gray squirrels. But black-tailed jackrabbits, gray foxes, bobcats, raccoons, skunks, opossums, coyotes, and even mountain lions made appearances, too.

The study established a baseline of wildlife movement in the corridor, but it also revealed how each species’ movement depends on its surroundings. Gray foxes, for instance, were much more likely to be photographed in areas of chaparral rather than forest. Gray squirrels, on the other hand, were less likely to be captured in chaparral; they preferred areas with greater canopy cover.

The results of the underpass study have sparked a conversation between Sonoma Land Trust and Caltrans on improving wildlife crossing structures throughout the corridor. And private landowners. . . are starting to implement changes that make their properties friendlier for wildlife. Even public lands are under assessment.”

**Please refer to the accompanying wildlife corridor map of Sonoma Valley.**

Additionally, for more information, visit <https://sonomalandtrust.org>