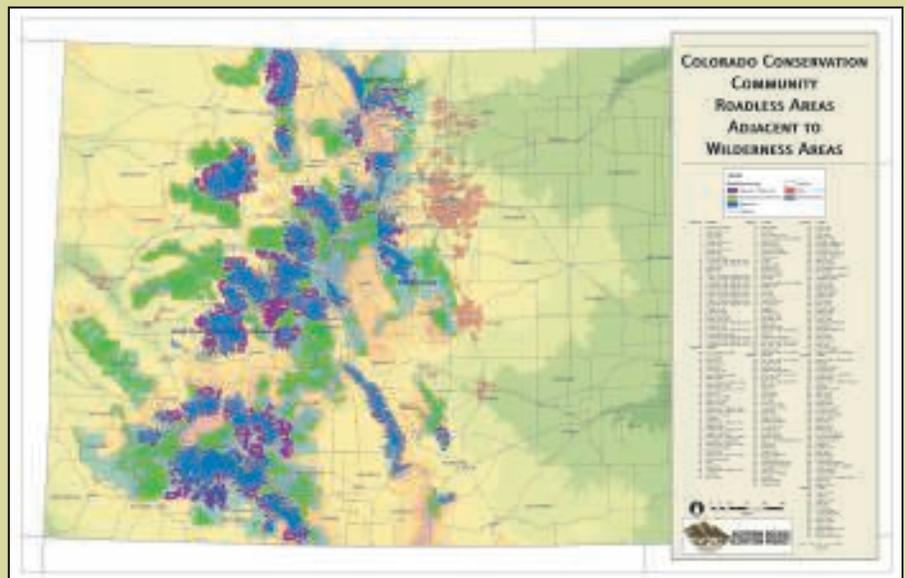


Each individual roadless area in Colorado is vital to the wildlife, economy, water quality, and overall vitality of Colorado's landscape. In addition, they serve as wildlife linkages that connect larger blocks of core habitat, providing food and shelter as animals migrate between seasonal habitat areas or disperse from their natal territories. For this reason, roadless areas that provide core habitats and linkages throughout Colorado must remain protected, intact, and connected in order to provide these critical resources to Colorado's wildlife.¹

The Importance of Keeping Habitat Connected

Roadless areas that are adjacent to each other and adjacent to other protected habitats - such as Wilderness areas and wildlife refuges - play a vital role in providing connected ecosystems and habitat for wildlife in Colorado. Preventing isolation by protecting connections between major habitat blocks and wild protected areas is crucial to maintaining the health of native wildlife populations.²

- Corridors connecting wildlife areas in some form are essential for most species - especially large animals - which cannot maintain viable populations in small, isolated areas.³ Large carnivores, ungulates, and other wildlife that migrate and move to meet their daily and seasonal needs rely on a system of connected landscapes and habitats in order to find mates, food, and access to their summer and winter ranges.²
- Roadless areas in Colorado contain a diverse array of species such as bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk, mountain lion, black bear, cutthroat trout, boreal toad, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon, as well as a diverse array of plants and insects. Our National Forests maintain this abundance of life, in part, because they still contain significant stretches of relatively wild, connected, remote, and undeveloped lands.³



Roadless areas serve as vital migratory corridors for wildlife moving throughout the Rocky Mountains.

- The ability for wildlife to move freely through the landscape advances seed and pollen dispersal, allows unoccupied habitats to be colonized following an environmental disturbance, and promotes genetic mixing among populations.²
- Because they are largely removed from the ecologically damaging impacts caused by easy human access, resource extraction, and housing development, large intact roadless areas are capable of providing several benefits that are valuable to biodiversity conservation, including:³
 - 1) providing habitat relatively free from the encroachment of invasive species;
 - 2) protecting aquatic habitats from significant sources of pollution and degradations; and
 - 3) providing excellent "baselines" or "living laboratories" by which to judge the ecological impacts of land management on ecosystems open to more intense multiple uses.
- Connectivity between roadless areas is necessary to reconnect fragmented landscapes and restore the role of natural processes such as fire, flooding, or intact nutrient cycling.

roadless areas and landscape connections



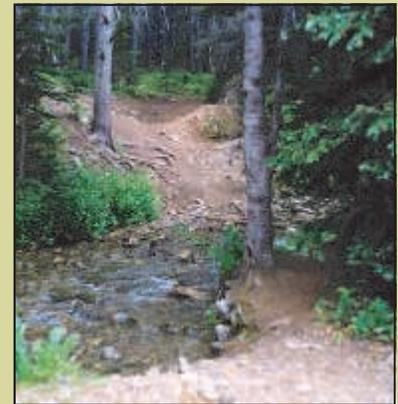
Animals like the endangered Canada lynx need stretches of undeveloped lands to maintain healthy populations.

Colorado Division of Wildlife

Habitat Fragmentation

Habitat fragmentation is a serious threat to wildlife. Highways, roads, and backcountry routes fragment wildlife habitat, severing historic wildlife migration routes and isolating wildlife populations. Roads and travelways have cut the land into smaller and smaller pieces, increasing edge habitat and presenting barriers to wildlife movements.⁴

- A forest patch adjacent to a clearcut or road can experience localized climate (known as a “microclimate”) changes that extend hundreds of feet into the forest interior. These “edge habitats” tend to be hotter and drier than the generally cooler, more moist, and wind-protected forest interiors, leading to changes in plant and animal species compositions.³
- Fragmented landscapes often block native species movement. For instance, studies have shown that certain species, such as amphibians or pine martens, are seldom able to successfully cross roads or clearcuts to expand into to other suitable habitat. Eventually, populations of native species can become isolated from each other as a result of habitat fragmentation. This isolation can cause numerous problems for native species, such as stress due to inadequate habitat conditions (e.g., limited food sources or restricted seasonal ranges), or inbreeding over time.³
- As landscapes become progressively fragmented, remaining native habitat patches may become so small that they are transformed entirely into edge habitat and may be unusable for many native species. Even relatively large remaining natural habitat patches may be too small for certain species to persist simply because they provide inadequate resources for feeding or breeding, or because human presence is increased.³



Pine Creek roadless area in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest contains a substantial elk migration corridor, as well as a corridor for lynx between the Elk Mountains, Pine Creek, and across the valley to Buffalo Peaks Wilderness

UASPP

1 SREP comments to Roadless Areas Review Task Force, submitted Dec. 8, 2006

2 www.restoretherockies.org

3 Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project. 2004. The State of the Southern Rockies Ecoregion. Colorado Mountain Club: Golden, Colorado.

4 Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project, et al. 2003. Southern Rockies Wildlands Network Vision: A Science-Based Approach to Rewilding the Southern Rockies. Colorado Mountain Club: Golden, Colorado.

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Colorado's Forest Legacy
Protecting our wild forests, wildlife, and water