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Editorial: Nature's path

New study identifies critical North Bay wildlife corridors

August 8, 2001

Press Democrat Editorial

A mountain lion is hit by a car while trying to cross Highway 101; a young bobcat dies of starvation while attempting to stake his claim in an island of forest surrounded by subdivisions; a wildflower's seeds are carried by the wind onto an asphalt parking lot, where they shrivel and die.

California's native plants and animals are increasingly threatened by urbanization, roads and agricultural lands that separate and isolate species. In an attempt to quantify the problem, a report released on Monday by the California Wilderness Coalition identifies 300 corridors that are critical to wildlife habitat.


In the North Bay, the study identifies the Russian River, Sonoma Creek and the coastland from Tomales Bay to Fort Bragg as critical migration and habitat pathways for animals that range from mountain lions to coyotes to coho.

The study recommends that, to the degree possible, manmade obstacles that block these corridors be removed or mitigated. Specifically, the report identifies Coyote Dam, invasive plant species and agricultural lands as barriers in the Russian River corridor.


While the coalition of public agencies, scientists and organizations that compiled the report don't recommend specific solutions for North Bay problems (they don't, for example, advise tearing down Lake Mendocino's Coyote Dam, which is a major water source for 600,000 people), they do propose that follow-up solutions be developed locally.

In the meantime, property owners can make it easier for plants and animals by leaving wooded areas undisturbed, by removing non-native plants that choke out native flora and by leaving gaps between fenced areas.

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