



South Coast Linkages at a Glance

Protecting Southern California's Natural Heritage for Future Generations

The following wildland linkages provide essential travel routes for wide-ranging species like cougars, badgers and bighorn sheep, and refuge for some of southern California's most rare and imperiled animals and plants. Maintaining these connections between natural areas will promote the long-term health of the state's land, water and air, and benefit both the wildlife and people who make southern California their home. The biological integrity of several thousand square miles of southern California's best wildlands will be irreversibly jeopardized if these linkages are lost.

Tehachapi Linkage

Location: Los Angeles & Kern Counties

Special Characteristics: The Tehachapi Connection has statewide importance as the sole wildland connection between the Sierra Nevada-Cascade system that stretches for over 2000 miles from southern Kern County into northern British Columbia, and the 800 mile long upland system comprised of the Sierra Madre, Transverse and Peninsular ranges. This linkage is situated at the juncture of several major ecoregions, including the Sierra Nevada, South Coast, Great Central Valley and Mojave Desert. The Tehachapis have been described as a "biogeographic crossroads" and are home to a stunning variety of plant and animal life including mountain lion, San Joaquin kit fox and burrowing owl.

Santa Monica – Sierra Madre Linkage

Location: Los Angeles & Ventura Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage is one of the few coastal to inland connections remaining in the South Coast region. It stretches from the rugged Santa Monica Mountains at the coast to the jagged peaks of the Santa Susana Mountains and the Sierra Madre Ranges of Los Padres National Forest. The linkage is comprised of a rich mosaic of oak woodland, savanna, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grasslands, riparian forests and woodlands that will serve species such as mountain lion, mule deer, acorn woodpecker and the Chaldeon checkerspot butterfly.

Sierra Madre – Castaic Linkage

Location: Los Angeles & Ventura Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage serves to connect the Los Padres and Angeles National Forests. It covers diverse ecological settings, with several main branches that contain a diversity of vegetation types including mixed conifer forests, oak woodlands, chaparral, coastal sage and desert scrubs, representing the variety of habitat needed by target species such as badger, western pond turtle and the California spotted owl.

San Gabriel – Castaic Linkage

Location: Los Angeles County

Special Characteristics: This linkage provides a connection between the San Gabriel and Castaic ranges, which together form the Angeles National Forest. The linkage encompasses a unique transition zone between coastal and desert landscapes, featuring coastal sage and

chaparral on the west, and desert scrub, juniper and Joshua tree woodlands to the east. The Santa Clara River, one of the last free-flowing rivers in southern California and an integral part of the linkage, provides breeding sites and traveling routes for a variety of wildlife, and supports other critical natural processes such as natural flood control, recharge of groundwater basins and nutrient cycling.

San Gabriel – San Bernardino Linkage

Location: Los Angeles & Riverside Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage provides connectivity between two expansive areas of the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests. The San Andreas Rift Zone runs through the linkage, producing steep rugged topography and a variety of microhabitats that support a rich diversity of natural communities, from coastal sage scrub and alluvial fan habitats in the southern foothills and chaparral, mixed conifer and oak woodlands in the central part of the linkage, transitioning to pinyon-juniper woodlands and desert scrub in the north. This linkage provides live-in and move-through habitat for rare wildlife such as bighorn sheep, San Bernardino kangaroo rat and the metalmark butterfly.

San Bernardino – Granite Linkage

Location: San Bernardino County

Special Characteristics: This linkage connects the San Bernardino National Forest with extensive natural lands in the Granite, Ord, and Rodman Mountains. The linkage encompasses both coastal and desert habitat types, with forests at higher elevations, juniper woodlands on the slopes, and creosote bush scrub with Joshua trees and cactus at lower elevations. Bighorn sheep roam the area, and an extremely rare alkali seep supports two imperiled plant species, the salt spring checkerbloom and Parish's alkali grass.

San Bernardino – Little San Bernardino Linkage

Location: San Bernardino & Riverside Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage serves to connect San Bernardino National Forest with Joshua Tree National Park. It also connects the South Coast Ecoregion to the Mojave and Sonoran deserts and encompasses a unique variety of both coastal and desert habitats. The desert fan palm oasis in Big Morongo Canyon Preserve in the linkage is known internationally for its bird diversity. In this landscape of predominantly dry vegetation, the desert oases provide essential resources that attract a diversity of wildlife such as mountain lion, badger and bighorn sheep as well as rare aquatic species.

San Bernardino – San Jacinto Linkage

Location: San Bernardino & Riverside Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage provides a connection between the San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountains, which together form the San Bernardino National Forest. The San Bernardino Mountains are part of the Transverse Ranges and feature the highest peak in southern California, Mount San Gorgonio, while the San Jacinto Mountains are the highest and northernmost of the Peninsular Ranges. Both coastal and desert habitats occur in the lowlands between these mountain masses, with the San Gorgonio River marking the transition between coastal habitats in the west and desert habitats in the east. Substantial alluvial plains fan out from the canyons on the floor of the San Gorgonio Pass, transporting and depositing sands that are essential to sustaining rare dune ecosystems in the Coachella Valley. The linkage serves species such as mountain lion, badger, little pocket mouse and coast horned lizard, and contains some of the most unique vegetation communities in the United States, including a desert fan palm oasis.

Palomar – San Jacinto – Santa Rosa Linkage

Location: Riverside & San Diego Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage facilitates wildlife movement between Cleveland and San Bernardino National Forests and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and overlaps portions of the Cahuilla and Santa Rosa Reservations. Elements of both coastal and desert habitats occur side by side in many areas of this linkage, serving wildlife such as mountain

lion, mule deer, Aguanga kangaroo rat, western toad and the endangered quino checkerspot butterfly.

Santa Ana – Palomar Linkage

Location: San Diego & Riverside Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage joins the Santa Ana Mountains and its coastal lowlands to the Palomar Mountains and inland ranges of San Diego County, serving to connect extensive natural areas of Cleveland National Forest. The Santa Margarita River, the longest intact stream corridor in southern California, winds through the linkage. Recent studies have shown that should this linkage be severed, mountain lions will likely become extinct in the Santa Ana Range.

Peninsular – Borrego Linkage

Location: San Diego & Imperial Counties

Special Characteristics: This linkage connects the coastal habitats of Cleveland National Forest and Cuyamaca Rancho State Park in the Peninsular Ranges with the desert communities of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The linkage contains a number of rare and sensitive natural communities, including coastal sage scrub, grassland, meadow, palm oasis, coast live oak forest and Engelmann oak woodland, which provide habitat for wildlife species such as mountain lion, black-tailed jackrabbit, grasshopper sparrow, granite night lizard and Sonoran blue butterfly.

Otay Mountain – Cerro San Ysidro Linkage

Location: Coastal San Diego County & Baja California

Special Characteristics: This linkage, which runs along Cottonwood Creek to the Laguna Mountains in the Cleveland National Forest, is the only remaining cross-border coastal sage scrub connector. Completion of this linkage will contribute to the recovery of 22 federally and state listed species and secure protection for some of the most rare and diverse vegetation communities in the world.

La Posta Linkage

Location: Campo Valley, San Diego County & El Hongo Valley, Baja California

Special Characteristics: An ecological transition area between the coast and the desert and between mountain and inland valley plant and animal communities, this linkage will conserve a series of small core areas, decrease fragmentation, and maintain a sanctuary of wilderness values at the edge of an urban metropolis.

Parque-to-Park Linkage

Location: Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego & Imperial counties, & Parque Constitución de 1857, Baja California

Special Characteristics: This continental-scale linkage along the Peninsular Ranges will ensure cross-border connectivity through the eastern edge of the South Coast Ecoregion and the Sonoran Desert. Completing this linkage will allow the endangered Peninsular Bighorn Sheep to repopulate the Sierra Juárez in northern Baja, and encourage bi-national collaboration in managing bighorn sheep and other wildlife populations.