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PRESS RELEASE

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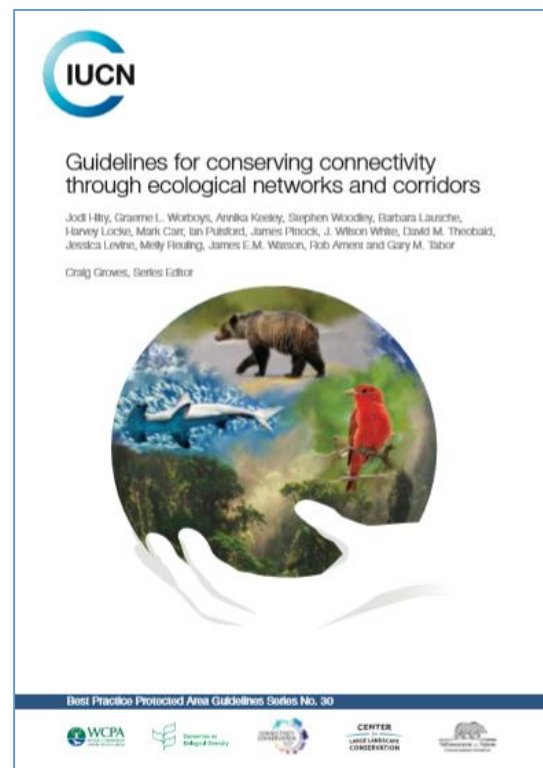
Just Published: Global Guidelines for Connectivity Conservation

Guidelines for protecting the interconnections of nature to enhance protected areas, conserve biodiversity, and increase resilience to climate change

BOZEMAN, MONTANA (7 July 2020) – Today, the IUCN WCPA [Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group](#) released the first-ever global guidelines for protecting the ecological connectivity of nature. The [IUCN Guidelines for Conserving Connectivity through Ecological Networks and Corridors](#) are now available free to the public to inform more consistent connectivity conservation practices that use the best-available science and innovations to ensure well-connected terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. These Guidelines introduce common definitions, highlight applications around the world with [25 case studies](#), and recommend designation of ecological corridors that knit together protected and conserved areas to form ecological networks for conservation.

The Guidelines are a principal output of the Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group (CCSG) under the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas. Developments toward this significant milestone began in 2003, with more than 100 experts in 30 countries having now contributed to this innovative guidance for communities, managers, policy-makers, and practitioners around the world. The main objective of these Guidelines is to provide insight into the leading tools for conserving the physical links between protected and conserved areas, and areas outside their boundaries as part of large, interconnected ecological networks.

The insights provided are premised on the knowledge that connected lands and waters provide crucial ecosystem services supporting human health and well-being, including wildlife migration, hydrology, nutrient cycling, pollination, seed dispersal, food security, climate



resilience and disease resistance. Importantly, the Guidelines build on the wide recognition that “ecological connectivity”, defined as “...the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth”,¹ is essential for healthy ecosystems, especially to combat biodiversity loss and climate change. To protect these vital interconnections of nature, the Guidelines are intended as the leading resource for connectivity conservation solutions that halt and reverse the fragmentation of nature around the world.

The Guidelines take inspiration from the great diversity of local, national, and transboundary connectivity conservation efforts already underway. These include, for example:

- [Over 130 large landscape and seascape conservation initiatives](#) underway around the world (see);
- [Bhutan](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Croatia](#), [India](#), [Kenya](#), [Malaysia](#), and the [Netherlands](#) undertaking national measures addressing connectivity values;
- The international Convention on Migratory Species affirming in the [Gandhinagar Declaration](#) its commitment to maintaining and restoring ecological connectivity as a top priority for conserving migratory species and their habitats; and
- The U.S. House of Representatives passing the first-ever [National Wildlife Corridor Conservation Act](#), and states like [New Hampshire](#), [New Mexico](#), [Oregon](#), and others adopting legislative acts related to ecological connectivity;

Key messages of the Guidelines include:

- Science overwhelmingly shows that interconnected protected areas and other areas for biological diversity conservation are much more effective than disconnected areas in human-dominated systems, especially in the face of climate change;
- Although it is well understood that ecological connectivity is critical to the conservation of biodiversity, approaches to identify, retain and enhance ecological connectivity have been scattered and inconsistent. At the same time, countries on every continent, along with regional and local governments, have advanced various forms of legislation and policy to enhance connectivity; and
- It is imperative that the world moves toward a coherent global approach for ecological connectivity conservation, and begins to measure and monitor the effectiveness of efforts to protect connectivity and thereby achieve functional ecological networks.
- These Guidelines define ecological corridors as ways to identify, maintain, enhance and restore connectivity, summarize a large body of related science; and recommend means to formalize ecological corridors and networks.

“Ecological connectivity conservation is rapidly emerging as a critical strategy to protect the dynamic processes that sustain nature in the face of habitat fragmentation and climate change. From wildlife corridors to swimways, these Guidelines will help managers develop consistent and measurable practices that conserve the movement ecology of species and the flows of natural processes across landscapes and seascapes.”

- Gary Tabor, President of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and Chair of the IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group

“To effectively conserve biodiversity we need to advance conservation at the scale that nature needs, and that means conserving ecological networks. Key components of these networks are ecological corridors that allow ecosystems to support movement of species and other life-sustaining processes on Earth. These Guidelines help society plan for a more connected future.”

- Jodi Hilty, President and Chief Scientist at Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative and Deputy Chair of the IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group

Access and download the Guidelines from the IUCN Library at this link:

<https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.PAG.30.en>.

A short video titled [“Nature’s Connective Tissue”](#) has been produced in parallel to highlight the urgent need to protect ecological connectivity.

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For more information about the Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group, contact the Secretariat: [Gary Tabor](#), Chair and [Aaron Laur](#), Executive Officer.

¹ https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop13_res.12.26_rev.cop13_e.pdf