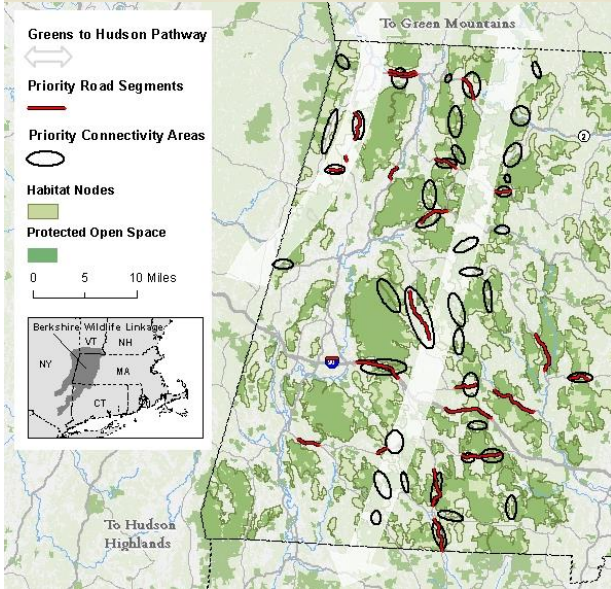


The Berkshire Wildlife Linkage, between the Green Mountains in VT and the Hudson Highlands in NY, contains large intact areas of forest (nodes) and corridors between them. The linkage is a key path for animals moving through the Appalachians. Individual large animals may move through the linkage in a lifetime, while smaller animals may move over several generations. Ensuring that wildlife can safely move between habitats, including across the roads and through the priority areas shown below, will allow them to find food and habitat and to adapt their ranges to climate change.



The Nature Conservancy has long worked to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. Providing safe passage for wildlife between core habitats is more important than ever, and can start in your own back yard.



Protecting nature. Preserving life.®

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As a landowner, what can you do?

If you own forestland:

The most important thing you can do is **keep your forest as forest**. If you actively manage your land, picture how it fits into the broader, regional landscape (see image on back). What habitat do you currently provide? What are your goals for the future of your land and the wildlife within it? The MassWoods website (masswoods.net) can connect you to licensed foresters and others who can help you assess next steps or create a forest management plan.

If you own farmland:

Consider maintaining, enhancing, or even widening hedgerows between fields where wildlife can travel while staying under cover. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS.usda.gov) has technical assistance programs and cost-sharing to help balance productivity and the long-term health of natural resources (including wildlife).

If you own land surrounding a lake, stream, or wetland:

Maintaining or planting a vegetated buffer along waterways ensures that wildlife have a place to travel, as well as providing protection against erosion and flooding and keeping the stream shaded for fish and other inhabitants.

Thank you for doing your part!

BECOMING INVOLVED IN WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY



A **landowner's guide** to maintaining a connected landscape for wildlife:

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS EDITION

Photo credits: Kent Mason/The Nature Conservancy (red eft salamander), The Nature Conservancy (forest and seedling), Amber Barger (moose), and Monica Erhart (landscape). Brochure modified from The Nature Conservancy's Vermont Greens-Adirondacks Linkage brochure by Paul Marangelo.

WHAT ROLE DOES YOUR LAND PLAY?

As wildlife travel through our human landscape, they rely on a combination of features to ensure safe passage.

Where does your land fit in?

Core Habitat

“Core” blocks of habitat are those that wildlife rely on for finding food, denning sites, and mating opportunities. They are generally large areas of contiguous forest land with a range of forest types and ages. Wildlife are *most likely* to be found in these core habitats. However, the genetic diversity required for healthy populations rely on the ability of wildlife to travel between these larger blocks of habitat.

Road Crossings

Along busy roads, there may be very few locations where animals attempt to cross. These areas tend to have forest or wetland on both sides of the road, no guardrails, and gentle terrain. When available, many animals choose to go under bridges or through large culverts to avoid traffic. These crossings are often *essential* for wildlife movement.

Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are vegetated strips along the edges of streams and rivers. Wildlife frequently travel along these areas, so long as there is sufficient cover. These areas can provide important movement pathways across the landscape.

Stepping Stones

Stepping stones are smaller blocks of quality habitat that provide cover, food, and mating opportunities for some wildlife. These are places where animals can stop or feed as they travel through the landscape between areas of “core” habitat, and where a few individuals can make their homes.

Shrublands and Young Forest

These open areas of natural cover provide abundant food sources, mating grounds, and cover for a wide range of species on the move.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows between fields provide a pathway where animals can travel safely under cover.

Keeping these features intact not only keeps wildlife healthy; it also enhances air and water quality, provides protection against devastating floods, keeps land available for traditional economic and recreational activities such as forestry, hunting, and hiking, and provides the backdrop that many residents and visitors alike are here to see.