THE PROJECT

A recent, innovative collaboration between local governments, conservation groups, universities, and ecologists identified priorities and developed recommendations for protecting wildlife habitats and the connections between them in Chatham, Durham, Orange, and Wake counties.

The project considered the habitat requirements of species identified by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and the NC Natural Heritage Program as species in need of conservation—such as the Eastern box turtle, Four-toed salamander, and Bobcat. Using existing conservation data and a geographic information systems approach, the analysis identified a prioritized network of wildlife habitats and corridors that maintain connectivity within and between the Eno River and New Hope Creek watersheds.

Results emphasize the importance of this network for supporting biodiversity across the landscape, and they identify critical locations where protection is needed to ensure habitat connectivity. The project also reviewed local government policies, ordinances, and conservation priorities to generate recommendations for a coordinated approach to landscape conservation planning. Following the recommendations from this collaborative effort will help ensure a vital landscape for both wildlife and people into the future.

COLLABORATORS









NORTH

Wildlike

RESOURCES

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee





NatureServe













A Landscape Plan for Wildlife Habitat Connectivity

IN NORTH CAROLINA'S ENO RIVER AND NEW HOPE CREEK WATERSHEDS





WHAT ARE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS?

Wildlife corridors are patches of habitat that link two or more natural habitat patches and provide pathways for animals to move or migrate. In the Eno River and New Hope Creek watersheds, wildlife corridors connect forests, wetlands, and other habitats that support a rich diversity of plant and animal species. Fragmentation of habitat caused by roads and development makes wildlife travel difficult or impossible. Intact corridors enable wildlife to successfully move through the landscape to meet their needs, ensuring healthy wildlife populations and reducing the likelihood of local extinctions.



WHY DO WE NEED WILDLIFE CORRIDORS?

The loss of biological diversity in North Carolina—across all plant and animal groups—is primarily caused by habitat loss and fragmentation. As human population density increases, existing conservation lands are becoming disconnected from other natural habitats by roads, development, and other causes of habitat fragmentation. In the face of increasing threats, including climate change, wildlife species need protected corridors to survive and thrive. Connecting wildlife habitat also secures benefits for water quality, native plants, the local economy (including working farms and forests), and public health.

WHAT CAN WE DO?



Important wildlife habitat anchors have been conserved by local land trusts, government, universities, utility companies, and others, but conversion of undeveloped land continues at a rapid pace. Without the protection of corridors that connect remaining natural areas, the benefits these lands provide for wildlife and people will diminish. To address these issues, local governments, communities, and individuals can implement the following recommendations:

- **COMMIT** to landscape conservation in recognition of the need to protect wildlife habitats and the connections between them
- **DEFINE** landscape conservation priorities using the results of this collaborative effort to identify habitats and connections that need protection
- **DEVELOP** and adopt clear, explicit landscape conservation plans
- **INTEGRATE** landscape conservation plans into land use planning and decision-making
- **COORDINATE** with other jurisdictions to implement landscape conservation plans
- FOLLOW established guidelines for protecting wildlife corridors and improving wildlife crossings

For more information on this project including how to support these efforts, please visit: https://ncbg.unc.edu/eno-new-hope-plan/