1. Overview

The movement of wildlife is at the core of what keeps our world connected and thriving. This includes the great migrations of animals traversing the planet using navigation skills we barely understand, the passages of wildlife between core habitat areas and seasonal resources- crucial for maintaining population health, or the flow of ecological process through landscapes. This "ecological connectivity" is the circulatory system of nature.

However, the combined impacts of land-use change, climate change, and existing and new physical infrastructure are constraining the movement of wildlife across landscapes. This is contributing to the biodiversity crisis, limiting nature's contributions to people, and leading to long-term indirect impacts on human well-being. The breakdown of ecological connectivity is a major driver of the loss of ecosystem services including pollination and pest regulation, as well as greatly limiting the ability of ecosystems to adapt to climate change.

> Ecological Connectivity is defined by the Convention on Migratory Species as *"the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth."*

Wildlife Connect aims to protect, manage, and restore ecological connectivity in large landscapes, thus enabling large-scale wildlife movements and sustaining the benefits they provide for ecosystems and people. The initiative will:

- Combat habitat fragmentation;
- Promote improved and integrated land-use planning and management to enable wildlife movements;
- Establish more enduring ecological corridors and networks;
- Strengthen well-being of indigenous peoples and local communities through wildlife permeable land-uses; and
- Mainstream biodiversity into key sectors to reduce barriers to movement.

Our planet will only survive if its ecosystems are connected. Because no entity can achieve connectivity alone, this initiative was co-created from the start through collaboration of WWF, the Center for Large Landscape Conservation, and the IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group. Together we can connect people, organisations, and our natural world.

2. Scope, Goal and Objectives

Wildlife Connect focuses on large landscapes where connectivity is essential for ecosystem health. The direct interventions will mainly occur *outside* protected and conserved areas, focusing on the ecological corridors between them. These corridors may encompass natural, semi-natural, or heavily altered areas, and often a combination of all three. The ultimate aim of the initiative is as follows:

> ***Goal:*** By 2030, Wildlife Connect maintains or increases ecological connectivity of landscapes, ensuring viable wildlife populations, ecosystem services, resilience to climate change, and human well-being

While the overall scope of Wildlife Connect is global, the initiative coalesces around **four demonstration landscapes,** one each in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. These landscapes will be our laboratories of innovation, where diverse collaborators are engaged to co-create and pilot novel solutions to the most intractable problems that prevent nature's linkages from functioning and thriving. This will be a substantial contribution to bending the curve of biodiversity loss, as well as securing the ecosystem services that local communities and indigenous communities depend on. This work is encapsulated in Objective 1:

> ***Objective 1:*** By 2026, structural and/or functional connectivity is maintained or increased in the four Wildlife Connect demonstration landscapes through protecting, managing, and restoring ecological corridors and ecological networks

Whilst these landscapes are the most crucial element of Wildlife Connect to demonstrate on the ground results, many of the drivers of landscape fragmentation and connectivity loss come from outside the landscape. It is therefore crucial to achieve systemic change by influencing the policies and practices of institutions and decision makers whose activities can have the most significant impact on connectivity. The approach to securing the global enabling environment for connectivity conservation is outlined in Objective 2, and aims to influence global governmental policy, as well as the policies and practices of corporations and financial institutions.

> ***Objective 2:*** By 2026, enabling conditions are enhanced at the global level, with governments, corporations, and financial institutions adopting policies and commitments that drive effective connectivity conservation outcomes on the ground.

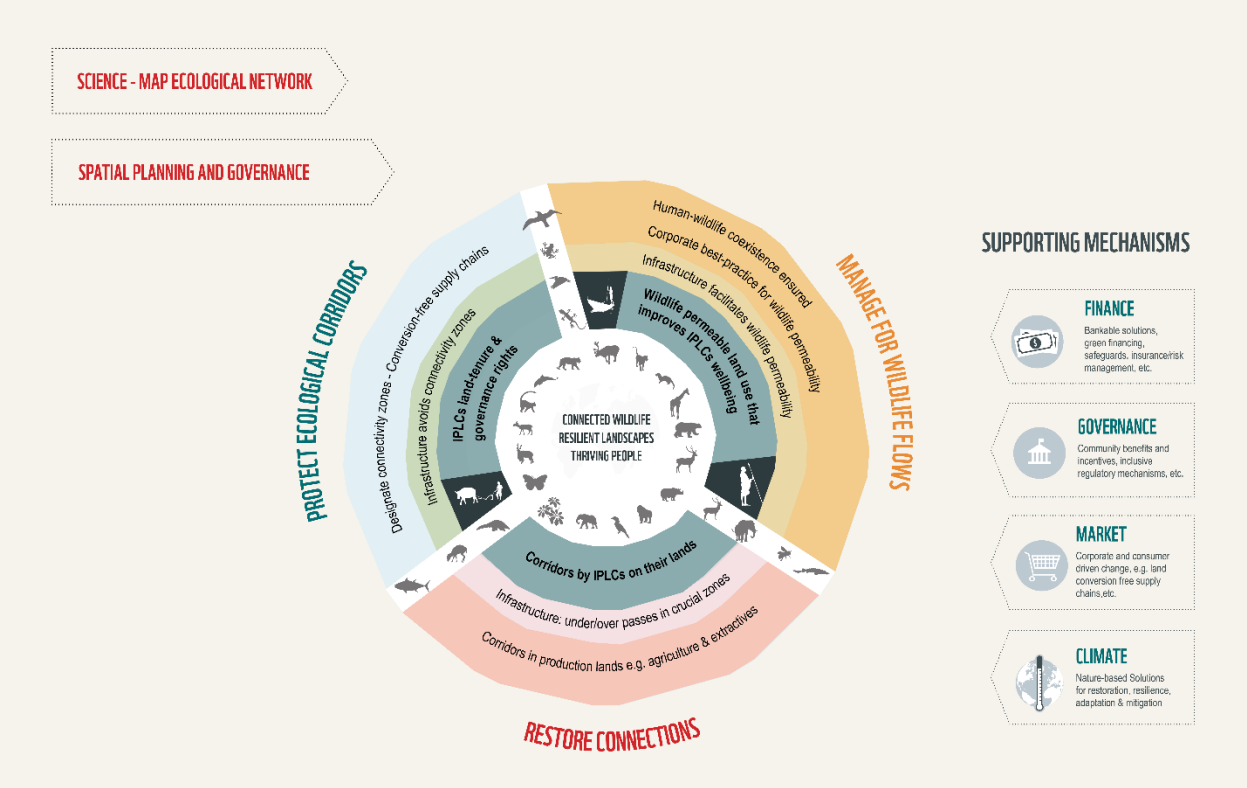
Given the great extent of landscape fragmentation and connectivity loss, it is evident that the four demonstration landscapes alone will not 'tip the balance'. Therefore, Wildlife Connect's Objective 3 aims to derive key tools, approaches, and lessons learned from the demonstration landscapes and elsewhere. These will be shared across the connectivity conservation community, with dedicated support to scale the most promising innovations. The IUCN Connectivity Guidelines provide a crucial starting point for this scaling, including a number of tools that are already being used in the demonstration landscapes and beyond.

> ***Objective 3:*** *By 2026, key tools and approaches for scaling effective connectivity conservation across WWF landscapes are developed and used globally, and the most promising innovations are replicated across continents*

3. Theory of change

The Theory of Change (TOC) starts with mapping the ecological network (including futures assessments that consider development scenarios and climate change), then engaging in cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder spatial planning and governance. It then moves into direct interventions to:

- Conserve ecological corridors: Avoid deforestation / conversion of key ecological corridors, including designating corridors, and securing conversion free supply chains;
- Manage for wildlife flows: Ensure land-uses in both natural and non-natural ecological corridors are managed to allow for wildlife flow, and ensure human wildlife coexistence;
- Restore connections: Restoration of ecological corridors where connectivity has been lost (reforestation, habitat enhancement, removing barriers to movement).



Ensuring more sustainable infrastructure that supports connectivity and climate resilience and adaptation is a key cross-cutting stream of work across all three of these areas.

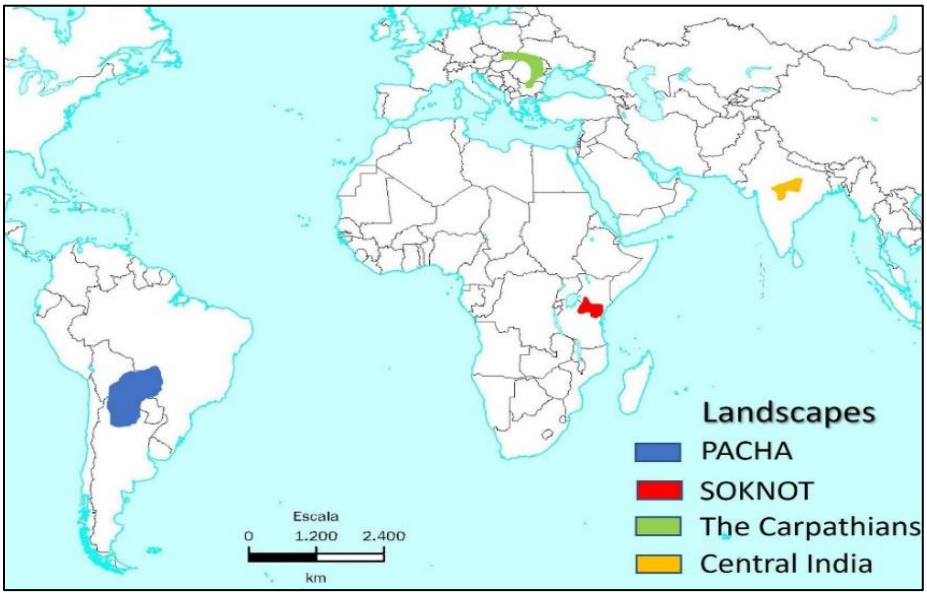
Central to achieving the TOC is engaging with indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), including supporting IPLC land tenure and governance rights, while strengthening well-being through wildlife permeable land-uses in ecological corridors.

The projects and activities to 'protect, manage and restore' connectivity will utilize a range of supporting mechanisms from finance, governance, markets, and climate spheres. Within the climate sphere, the momentum around Nature Based Solutions (NbS) offers a particular opportunity.The benefits of nature-based solutions will be magnified by deploying them across the full extent of ecological corridors. This will deliver benefits not only from the site of the NbS itself, but also unlock the potential of a well-connected, climate-resilient landscape making ecological networks nature's own blueprint for taking nature-based solutions to scale.

4. Demonstration landscapes

The above Theory of Change and its strategies will be tested and adapted in the Wildlife Connect demonstration landscapes:

- Africa: Southern Kenya-Northern Tanzania (SOKNOT) or also referred to as “Unganisha”;
- Asia: Central India Landscape;
- Europe: Carpathians, covering Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine
- Latin America: Pantanal-Chaco (PACHA), covering Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil



The demonstration landscapes vary greatly. We will be working in the African savannahs, the largest wetland in the world in the heart of South America, Europe’s last remaining mountain wilderness, and the tiger’s most significant remaining refuge in India. Thus, each landscape has adapted the TOC to suit their local context.

These demonstration landscapes are not the only places WWF, CLLC, and CCSG are working on connectivity – far from it. They are simply the landscapes where Wildlife Connect aims to significantly scale-up of innovation, activities, and impacts, and deploy lessons that can be shared more broadly.

5. Join us

Connectivity cannot be achieved in isolation. We welcome collaboration and engagement with all entities with an interest in this topic. More information and regular updates can be found at www.wildlifeconnect.org.