



Testimony Requested by The Vermont House Natural Resources Committee
Presented with original photography © Susan C. Morse – February 3, 2021







In order to safeguard biodiversity and healthy natural ecosystems for our children, indeed, all that lives, we must inspire all Vermonters to celebrate the intrinsic, ecological and economic value of permanently conserved, forever-wild forests throughout the state.







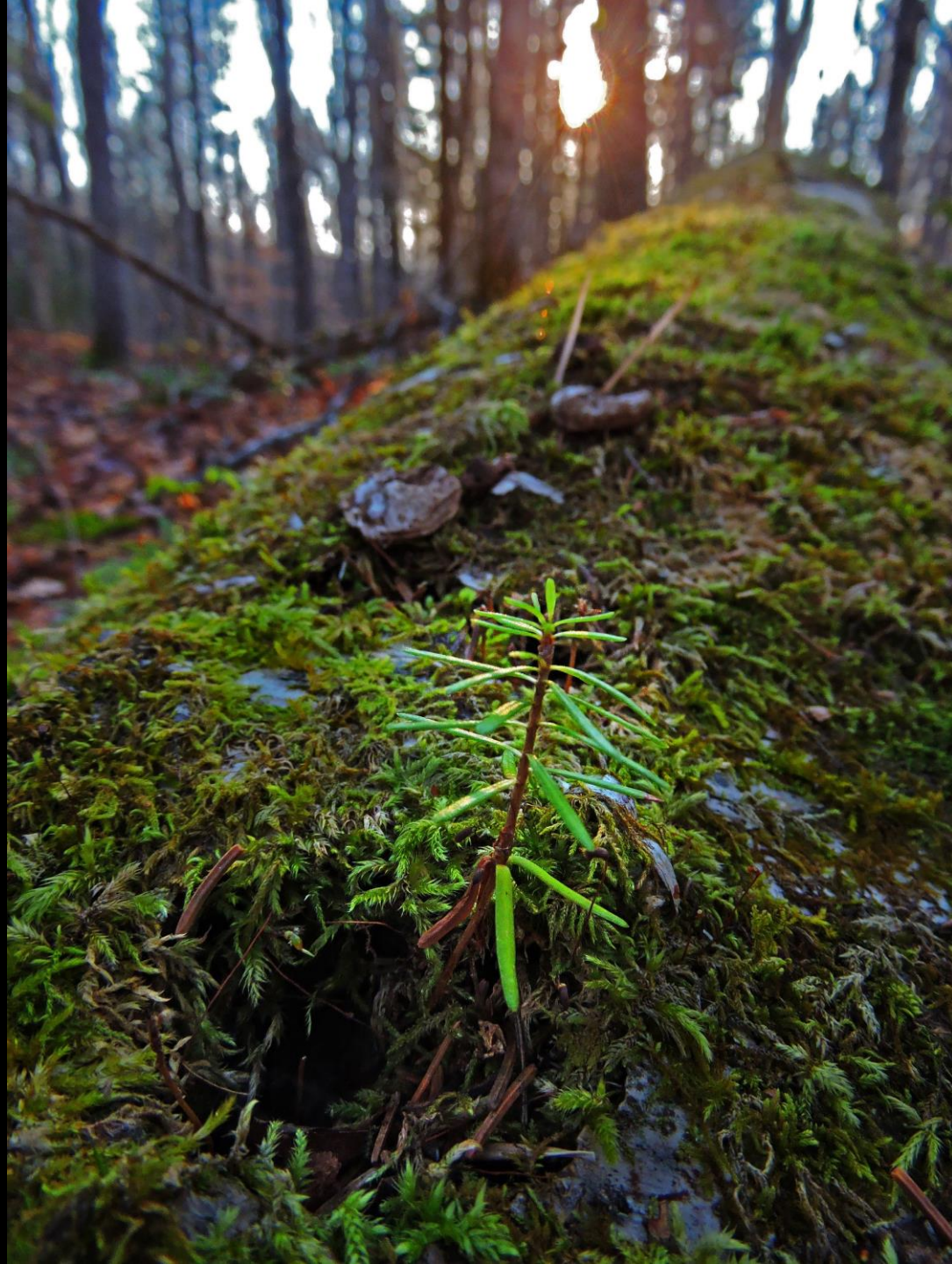






















Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Connectivity: Potential State Legislation

Overview

The United States is home to a rich array of wildlife. Both habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors play a vital role in species survival as well as in preserving ecological functions such as healthy water supplies.

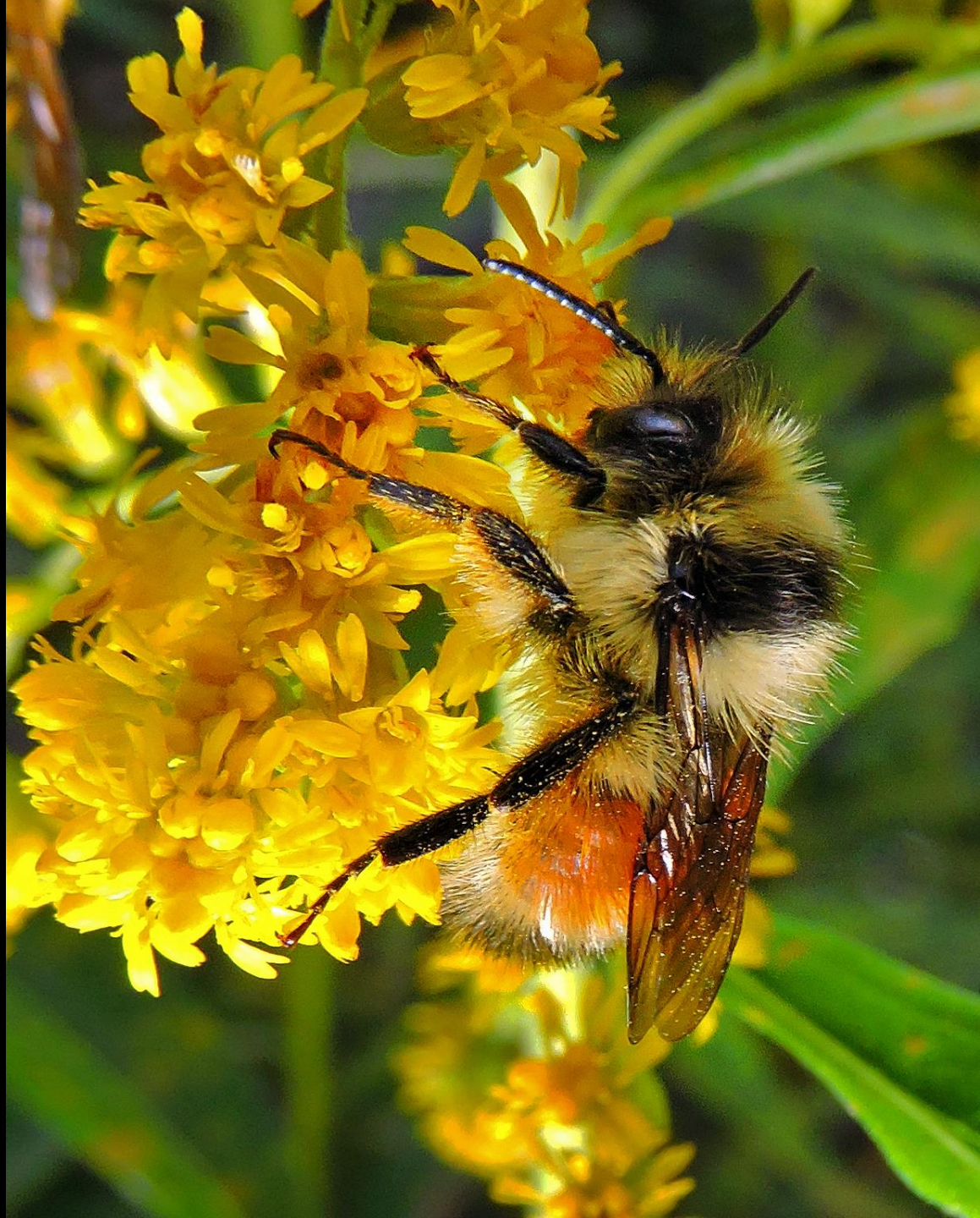
Potential State Provisions



Support the identification and conservation of wildlife corridors, including migratory routes and routes used by resident/non-migratory aquatic and terrestrial species

- Authorize studies, task forces, working groups and/or public engagement campaigns to develop corridor designations and recommendations.
- Direct state agencies to identify and protect state-designated wildlife corridors, and encourage agencies to raise awareness regarding the benefits of state-designated corridors.
- Require incorporation of connectivity information into State Wildlife Action Plans via revision or amendment.
- Use state-designated wildlife corridors to inform federal, regional, local and other initiatives such as federal land agency planning, and local land use planning/growth/development codes.













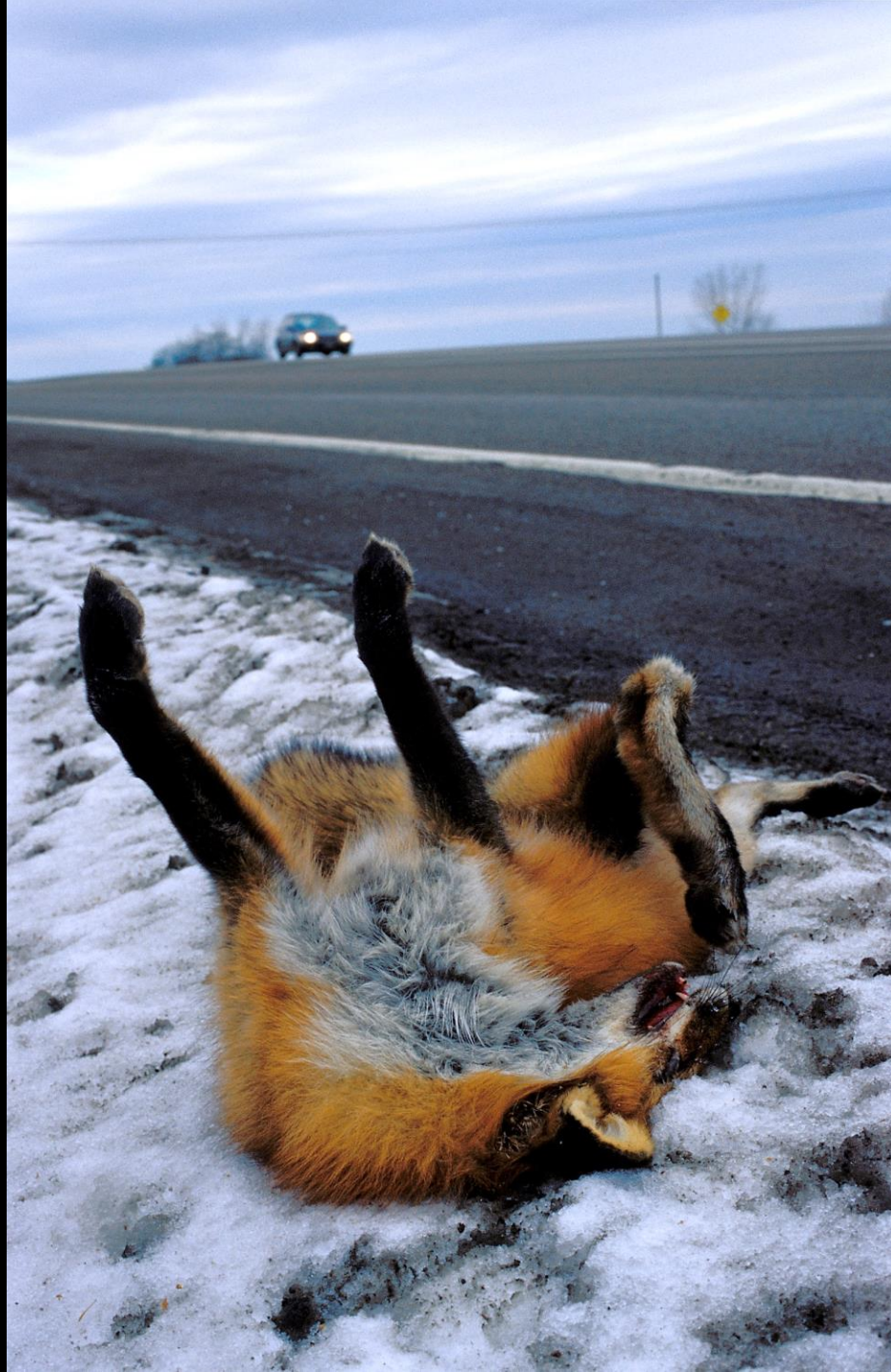
















Vegetated overpass, rendering created by The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Pima County, AZ

















Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are recognized as an aggregate of combined and often synergistic human-caused effects which negatively impacts wildlife, their habitat and ecosystem services. Described by conservation scientists as “death by a thousand cuts”, individual impacts may be regarded as minor. However, these disturbances are recognized to be incremental and are collectively significant when measured over time and space. For example, scientists now recognize that global scale problems that confront healthy ecosystems today are the accumulation of a staggering number of separate and seemingly inconsequential human-caused effects which now have combined to seriously threaten life as we know it. In this way, global climate change, acid precipitation, genetic isolation, habitat fragmentation and the bioaccumulation of toxins in the food web are the deadly result of decades of unregulated cumulative effects.

Why Conserved Wild Forests are Important?

Habitat loss and disturbances, as a consequence of resource extraction, energy development, and even human recreation contribute to wildlife population declines. Over time, and across vast habitats, the cumulative effects of a multitude of stresses causes wildlife to experience behavioral, physiological, demographic and distributional changes. These challenges can result in reduced fitness, unnecessary and costly energetic expenditures, and avoidance of altered habitats, human infrastructures and recreational intrusions. Vermont's opportunity to permanently conserve forever – wild forests is critical at this time, so that plants and animals can be insulated from our disturbances, and find necessary refugia in healthy habitats.







Why are permanently conserved core and connective habitats important?







































“... I propose that only by committing half of the planet’s surface to nature can we hope to save the immensity of the life-forms that compose it”

“The living world is in desperate condition. It is suffering steep declines in all the levels of its diversity. ... Only a major shift in moral reasoning, with greater commitment to the rest of life, can we meet the greatest challenge of the century. Wildlands are our birthplace.”

E.O. Wilson

Half-Earth: Our Planet’s Fight for Life