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Border Wall Construction Destroys Critical Wildlife Habitat in Patagonia Mountains

Rapid bulldozing begins in mountain woodlands that over 75 wildlife species call home

TUCSON, Arizona—Sky Island Alliance today calls for immediate action to be taken to stop the border wall construction happening in the Patagonia Mountains, just 10 miles east of Nogales. Over the holiday weekend, rapid bulldozing along the U.S.-Mexico border cut a wide road through the range’s woodland and grassland habitats, leaving mountain slopes bare of vegetation and at risk of mass-wasting erosion during rain events. This destruction comes just days before the Biden-Harris administration takes office.

Located 70 miles southeast of Tucson, the Patagonia Mountains offer one of the last cross-border wildlife corridors for jaguars and other rare species in the Sky Islands of Arizona. Sky Island Alliance’s Border Wildlife Study, which since April 2020 has documented the wildlife threatened by border wall construction, has detected over 75 wildlife species in the Patagonia Mountains. These species include mountain lion, bobcat, black bear, white-nosed coati, javelina, grey fox, and opossum, all of which will be severed from critical food and water sources if this section of border wall construction continues.

“This region, its wildlife, and its people have already seen enough loss and hardship. Enough is enough,” said Program Director Emily Burns, Ph.D. “This reckless destruction must stop. We’re asking the Biden-Harris administration to issue an Executive Order to stop wall construction immediately.”

In response to this increased threat, Sky Island Alliance is intensifying efforts to halt border wall construction, monitor the region’s critical wildlife corridors, document the footprint of damage inflicted on the landscape, and track the impacts the wall has on wildlife species.

“Our hope is that the Biden-Harris administration will act fast to stop further damage from border wall construction,” said Executive Director Louise Misztal. “Our attention must instead turn to restoring the wildlife refuges, national park lands, wilderness areas, and Native sacred lands and springs that have been so severely impacted by this wall.”

Sky Island Alliance is a regional conservation nonprofit dedicated to protecting and restoring the diversity of life and lands in the Sky Island region of the U.S. and Mexico. Sky Islands are mountain ranges primarily in Arizona and Sonora that rise out of arid grasslands and desert seas and provide vibrant habitat for plants and wildlife.

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