

MEGA FAUNA

AN ILLUSTRATED MAP & GUIDE

Created for Megafauna Awareness Day 2010 at the Page Museum, this map and guide to Southern California megafauna ties together living animals, the rich fossil record of the Los Angeles area, and today's mega-city.

What are Megafauna?

Megafauna is an informal term for large mammals that weigh more than 100 pounds and refers to both living and extinct species. It includes living animals such as elephants, hippos and whales, and domesticated species like cows and horses.

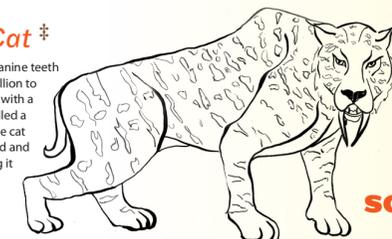
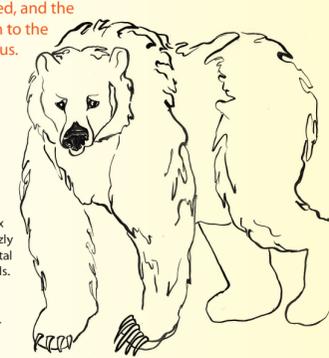
The term is most often used to describe the many large animals that lived during the Pleistocene Epoch, such as mammoths, mastodons, saber-toothed cats, short-faced bears and dire wolves. Megafauna flourished during the Pleistocene, which lasted 2.6 million to 12,000 years ago, but most megafauna disappeared worldwide by about 10,000 years ago in what is known as the Ice Age extinction event. In North America, 33 out of 45 genera of large mammals became extinct, including several species of mastodons, mammoths, bears, cats and stranger animals such as car-sized relatives of modern armadillos known as Glyptodonts. Theories for these extinctions include climate change and overkill by humans.

Megafauna Awareness Day

First proposed as a "Megafauna Extinction Day" by paleontologist Paul S. Martin in the postscript to his 2005 book, *Twilight of the Mammoths*, Los Angeles is a natural location for the first Megafauna Awareness Day because of its unique status as a major metropolitan area with a huge fossil site, the Rancho La Brea Tar Pits. With fossils literally embedded into the fabric of the city, the day is an effort to spur public dialogue about what has been lost, what needs to be saved, and the human role in relation to the large animals around us.

Grizzly Bear †

The grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) is North America's second largest carnivore after the polar bear, and is also found in Asia and Europe. On average, they stand about three feet tall at the shoulder and six to eight feet on their hind legs. Inland grizzly bears are generally smaller than their coastal cousins, who can weigh up to 1,500 pounds. Once widespread across the West, grizzly bears are now found in Alaska, Western Canada and portions of the Northwest U.S.



Saber-toothed Cat ‡

These carnivores with extremely long canine teeth lived in the Americas from about 2.5 million to 12,000 years ago. A bulky, muscular cat with a short tail, it is sometimes mistakenly called a saber-tooth tiger even though it is in the cat family. The animal most likely ambushed and pounced upon prey rather than chasing it down like other cats. One of the most common finds in the La Brea Tar Pits is the species *Smilodon fatalis*, which stood about one meter high at the shoulder and weighed an estimated 350 to 620 pounds.



Mountain Lion *

The Mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), also known as puma or cougar, has a distinctive sandy color and unusually long, black-tipped tail. The cougar is one of the most wide-ranging mammals in North America. They are mostly solitary and may cover thousands of acres in search of their food. These animals can be found in all the major mountain ranges of Southern California.



Pronghorn Antelope *

The pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) is the fastest running animal in the Americas, reaching speeds of more than 45 mph. It weighs 70 to 150 pounds and has only two toes (no dewclaws), and like other native artiodactyls it lacks upper canine teeth as well as upper incisors. Both sexes have true horns, not antlers, but unlike bovids, the pronghorn sheds its sheath every fall, revealing a small bony core around which a new sheath forms in the spring. The darkly colored sheath is branched, hence the name pronghorn.

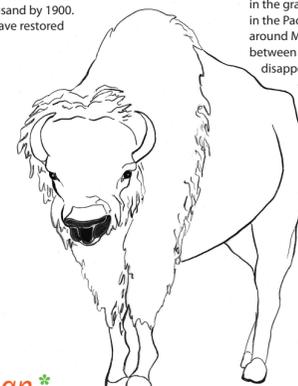


Bighorn Sheep *

The Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) is one of three species of mountain sheep worldwide. The large horns of the males weigh up to 30 pounds, while the animals weigh up to 300 pounds. The characteristic horn clashing occurs between rams during mating season. The Bighorn Sheep's ancestors crossed the Bering land bridge from Siberia during the Pleistocene Epoch about 750,000 years ago and spread through western North America. Once numbering in the millions, the population crashed to several thousand by 1900. Subsequent conservation efforts have restored some populations.

Bison *

The American bison (*Bison bison*) was once widespread in the grasslands of North America but was also found in the Pacific Northwest, where it was most common around Malheur Lake in Oregon and in the area between Eagle and Honey lakes in California. The bison disappeared from the Northwest early in the post-glacial period, prior to the arrival of Europeans. It died out in California about the time the Native Americans acquired horses but before they had firearms. In California today, it is found on ranches and a small herd also roams Catalina Island.



Wild Burrow *

The burro (*Equus asinus*) is a small equid with large ears and a short, erect mane. In Southern California, it inhabits arid lands from Inyo to Imperial counties. Basically a plant feeder, the burro is very adaptable and will eat almost anything. Present wild populations in California descend from stock discarded by Spanish ranchers. 19th-century miners and the U.S. Cavalry after World War I wild burros are protected by the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

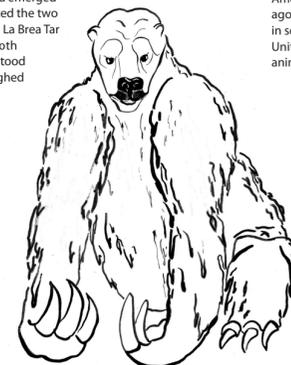


Human *

Anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) originated in Africa around 200,000 years ago and are now widespread, numbering about 6.8 billion worldwide. Like other primates, humans are social by nature but also utilize systems of communication to create complex social structures. A natural curiosity combined with the ability to pass on knowledge has resulted in tools and skills through which humans can understand and influence their environment. Only one human has been found in the La Brea Tar Pits—a partial skeleton of a woman believed to be about 9,000 years old—but the Greater Los Angeles area is now home to about 13 million people.

Ground Sloth ‡

Ground sloths are a diverse group of extinct sloths that lived from 35 million to 12,000 years ago. Evolving from tree sloths in South America when the continent was separated from North America, ground sloths spread north as the Isthmus of Panama emerged from the sea floor and connected the two continents. Sloths found at the La Brea Tar Pits include Harlan's Ground Sloth (*Paramylodon harlani*), which stood more than six feet tall and weighed 3,500 pounds, and the Shasta Ground Sloth (*Nothrotheriops shastensis*), which weighed about 500 pounds.



Horse *

All members of this family, which also includes zebras and donkeys, have a single toe on each limb, a bushy dorsal mane and a long, well-haired tail. Although horse-like animals were once native to North America, they disappeared more than 10,000 years ago. The herds of feral horses that are now found in several locations throughout the Western United States are descended from domestic animals introduced by European settlers.

Guadalupe Fur Seal *

Guadalupe fur seals (*Arctocephalus townsendi*) breed along the eastern coast of Guadalupe Island, approximately 140 miles west of Baja California, and have been sighted along islands off the Southern California coast. Reduced to a few dozen by sealers in the 19th century, the species now numbers about 10,000 but is still listed as endangered.



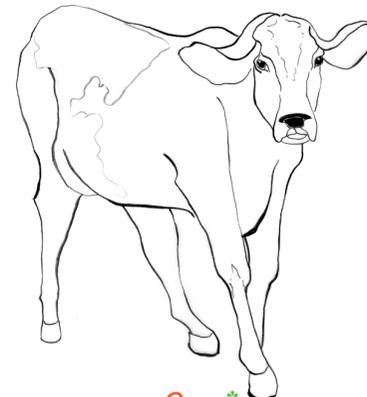
Black Bear *

The black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is North America's most common bear and has coarse black, brown or cinnamon fur, a white patch on the throat or belly, and a small tail. It is four to six feet long, stands up to three feet tall at the shoulder, and weighs between 125 and 500 pounds. Black bears today are found in sparsely populated, forested areas.



Giant Short-faced Bear ‡

The giant short-faced bear (*Arctodus simus*) lived in North America from 800,000 to 12,000 years ago. It stood five feet tall at the shoulder and rose to an impressive 10 feet when standing. This bear was taller than a polar bear and twice the weight of a grizzly, and is estimated to have weighed between 1,700 to 2,500 pounds.

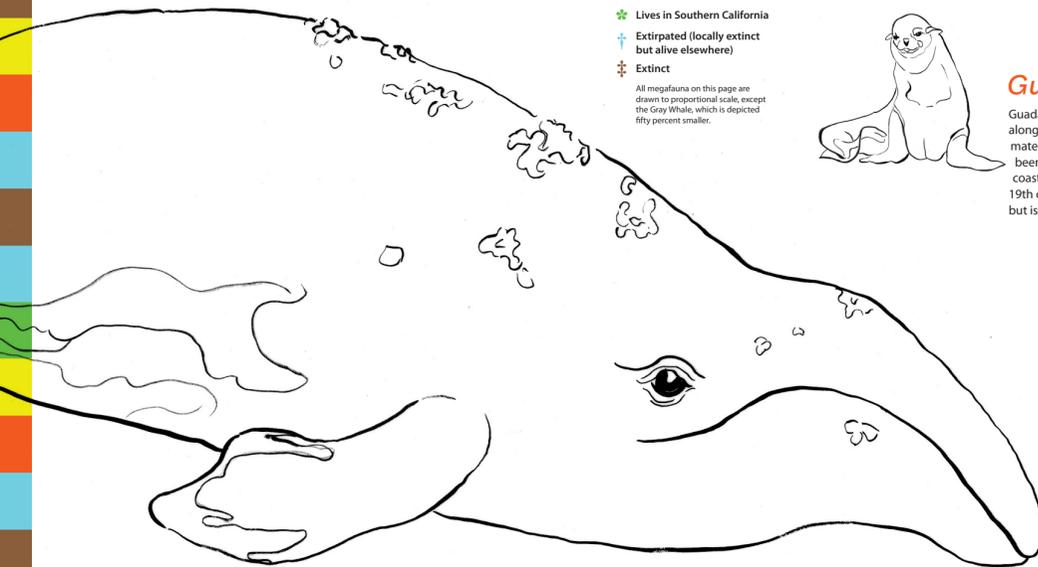


Cow *

Cattle (or cows) are the most common large domesticated ungulate or hoofed animal. They have been domesticated since the early stone age, or about 10,000 years ago. Today, it is estimated that there are 1.3 billion cattle worldwide, and they are raised for meat, dairy products, hides and are used as draft animals.

Gray Whale *

Mottled gray and encrusted with barnacles, adult gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*) are 36 to 50 feet in length and weigh upward of 36 to 40 tons. A large female whale may be equal in weight to seven to eight African bull elephants. Highly migratory, the Eastern Pacific gray whale, also known as the California gray whale, spends summers feeding in the shallow coastal waters off northern and western Alaska. By October or November gray whales begin their southward migration to the shallow lagoons of Baja California, Mexico.



- ★ Lives in Southern California
 - † Extirpated (locally extinct but alive elsewhere)
 - ‡ Extinct
- All megafauna on this page are drawn to proportional scale, except the Gray Whale, which is depicted fifty percent smaller.

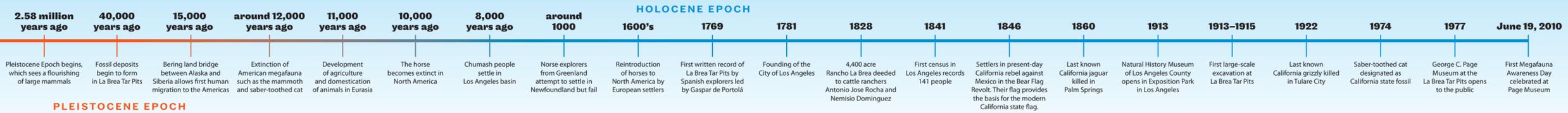
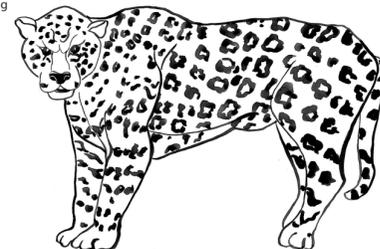


Mammoth ‡

A relative of the modern elephant, mammoths lived from about 4.8 million to 12,000 years ago, though some species of pygmy mammoths lived until about 6,500 years ago. Mammoths often had large, curving tusks and are believed to have weighed six to eight tons and stood up to 16 feet tall at the shoulder. Excavations in Southern California, such as the La Brea Tar Pits and Diamond Valley Lake, have turned up remains of the Imperial mammoth (*Mammuthus imperator*) and Columbian mammoth (*Mammuthus columbi*).

Jaguar †

Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) are the largest cat native to North America and third largest cat globally. They are rather shy creatures but have been known to bring down prey the size of a grown horse or a large bull. Originally found from California to the Carolinas, jaguars were hunted to near extinction. Jaguars were added to the U.S. list of endangered species in 1997, following litigation by the Center for Biological Diversity.



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 Printed by PACE Lithographers on 100% post consumer recycled paper
 Production of this map was funded by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

THANKS
 Paul Beier, School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff
 Paisley S. Cato, Ph.D., Assistant Director, Western Science Center
 Lora Kondek, California Department of Fish and Game
 Sam McLeod, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County Mountain Lion Foundation
 Kristeen Penrod, Conservation Director, South Coast Wildlands
 Steven G. Torres, Wildlife Investigations Lab, Supervisor, Wildlife Branch, California Department of Fish and Game
 Jeff Villeplaque, Associate Wildlife Biologist, California Department of Fish and Game
 The staff of the George C. Page Museum and the Public Programs Department of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

MEGAFAUNA

Examining Southern California megafauna throughout millions of years of history, this map includes information on fossil sites, charismatic animals, living populations of wild megafauna and linkages that could help preserve them, as well as museums, zoos and parks where you can interact with living large mammals or see examples of extinct species.

Ant Hill
A major fossil site near Bakersfield, petrified whale vertebrae and shark teeth that are about 13.5 million years old can be easily pulled from the sedimentary layers.

DAIRY COWS
Bakersfield is one of a number of cities playing an increasing role in the dairy industry. More and more mega-sized dairies continue to move into the San Joaquin Valley.

PRONGHORN ANTELOPE
The Carrizo Plain, the largest single native grassland remaining in California, is home to the Pronghorn Antelope.

Grizzly Adams and the Jaguar
James Capen "Grizzly" Adams wrote of a 1855 encounter with a jaguar near Tehachapi, California. The animal retreated, though he was able to observe "a majestic animal of the lion genus" and hear its low roar. He tracked the large feline to a gorge and an elevated cave that was clearly the animal's den. Adams followed the cat and its family for two weeks, during which he tried unsuccessfully to trap the animals.

WILLIAM S. HART RANCH BISON
The Hart Ranch bison herd started with the donation of nine animals by the Walt Disney Studios that were originally used for the 1956 film Westward Ho the Wagons. Today, the herd numbers 14 and they roam 25 acres of the 265-acre ranch. Visitors can see the animals from viewing areas and hiking trails.

WILD HORSES AND BURROS
More than 3,000 wild horses and 12,000 wild burros have been removed from China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, which encompasses 1.1 million acres in California's Upper Mojave Desert. The only burros on non-federal land in California is a herd of about 50 that roam Reche Canyon, which stretches between Colton and the Moreno Valley. According to the Bureau of Land Management, most wild burros are descended released Spanish stock and World War I cavalry mounts.

Monarch the Grizzly
Monarch the grizzly bear was captured in 1889 in the San Gabriel Mountains and was sold and taken to San Francisco. He lived for a few years in captivity at Woodward's Gardens before he was taken to a zoological garden at Golden State Park. During the next 22 years, thousands came to see him. After his death, Monarch was mounted and now stands in San Francisco's California Academy of Science.

AMERICAN BLACK BEAR
The American black bear is not native to Southern California, an absence believed to be due to competitive exclusion by grizzly bears. Once humans drove grizzlies out of California near the beginning of the 20th century, black bears appeared in Southern California and were even introduced into the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountains by the California Department of Fish and Game.

BIGHORN SHEEP
Found in the rocky mountainous regions of California, bighorn sheep in the San Gabriel Mountains once represented the largest population of that species within the state. Recent declines have been linked to habitat changes and mountain lion predation. According to the U.S. Department of Fish and Game, sheep in the San Gabriel's declined from 740 in 1980 to less than 100 in 2002, when they met the criteria for federal endangered status as a distinct population segment.

WHALE WATCHING
Whale watching cruises leave from a variety of locations in Southern California. The best time to see migrating gray whales is from December through April. During the rest of the year, many companies offer dolphin and sea life tours. Not into a cruise? Dolphins are easy to spot at any ocean-adjacent park or beach. It's also possible to see whales without leaving the shore. The best spots are on cliffs or overlooks where you'll have a better vantage point to see waterspouts, tails or possibly a whole whale.

Pygmy Mammoth Skeleton
Pygmy Mammoths lived in the Channel Islands from 20,000 to 4,000 years ago. Skeletons were first reported in 1873, and in 1994, an almost complete skeleton was found on Santa Rosa Island. A cast of this skeleton is on display at the Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center in Ventura.

Prehistoric Whales
Many prehistoric whale skeletons have been found in Palos Verdes, including a skeleton uncovered in June, 1952. In general, the Palos Verdes area is rich in Miocene Epoch marine fossils and Pleistocene Epoch marine and terrestrial fossils.

Horsetown USA
Norco, California is the self-proclaimed "Horsetown USA," where riding, training and breeding horses are part of civic identity. There are hitching posts outside the Rite-Aid and the Saddle Sore Eatery & Saloon, and the city has 95 miles of equestrian trails.

Coal Canyon Wildlife Underpass
In 2003, the Coal Canyon exit of the 91 became the first freeway interchange in the U.S. to be turned into wildlife underpass. After the underpass was completed, research revealed that one mountain lion crossed under the corridor more than 22 times in 18 months.

Landfill Whale Fossil
While digging at the Prima Deshecha Landfill in 2002, a crew discovered a prehistoric whale skeleton. The 19.5 foot long specimen includes the skull and most the backbone. The fossil was found in 5 to 7 million-year-old sediments of a former ocean bottom.

CATALINA ISLAND BISON
A small herd of bison was brought to Catalina Island in 1924, supposedly for the silent Western film, The Vanishing American. The herd grew to as many as 600, but now numbers about 150 and is maintained by the Catalina Island Conservancy. Not native to Catalina, the bison do contribute to the biological balance of the island's ecosystem and are now part of the culture of the island.

MOUNTAIN LIONS
Somewhere between 300 to 500 mountain lions can be found in a 800 square mile area of the Santa Ana Mountains. Half of this area is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Navy and thus protected from urbanization. Groundbreaking research was conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s by wildlife biologist Paul Beier, who captured 32 cougars and radio-tagged them to determine their density, sex, and class structure.

Reckless
Reckless, a Mongolian mare purchased from a Korean race track for \$250, became famous for his exploits in the Korean War. The horse carried ammunition to troops of the 1st Division Rifle Platoon and even learned to lay down during heavy enemy fire. One of the most decorated horses in U.S. history, Reckless died in the Camp Pendleton stables in May, 1968.

COWS LEAVING THE INLAND EMPIRE
Once a \$500 million industry in the Inland Empire, within the last decade the dairy industry has rapidly disappeared as dozens of dairies in the area have been sold to real estate developers.

Major Fossil Sites

- A Rancho La Brea
Rich in mammal fossils from the last Ice Age, the combination of a large fossil bed within a major metropolitan center is unique in the world.
B Anza-Borrego Desert
The fossil record from this park in Eastern San Diego County includes Pleistocene fossils such as mammoths and sloths, as well as older marine and terrestrial Miocene Epoch fossils.
C Murrieta and Temecula
Pleistocene Epoch terrestrial fossils.
D Diamond Valley Lake
Excavations at this site have resulted in the largest collection of Pleistocene fossils recovered in Southern California.
E Emery Borrow Pit
This fossil bed was discovered during gravel excavations in the 1950s and 60s. By public demand, the land was purchased by Orange County in 1974 and opened as Los Coyotes Regional Park in 1981. It is now known as Ralph B. Clark Regional Park.
F Lake Manix
A former lake fed by the Mojave River in San Bernadino, this site includes Pleistocene terrestrial and freshwater fossils from 450 to 18 thousand years ago.

Earlier Epochs

- G Oak Ridge Hills
This area, just north of the Simi Valley, is rich in Eocene and Oligocene Epoch terrestrial fossils.
H North flank of the Santa Monica Mountains
Typical finds are late Miocene Epoch marine fossils.
J Palos Verdes Peninsula
Rich in late Miocene marine and Pleistocene terrestrial and marine fossils.
K Newport Back Bay
Late Miocene marine fossils and Pleistocene terrestrial and marine fossils.
L Mission Viejo
Late Miocene marine deposits.

GUADALUPE FUR SEAL
The Guadalupe fur seal was once a prime target of British and Yankee fleets that sought the animal for its rich, thick fur. It is believed that the seal's historic range extended 350 miles southwest of the Baja California Peninsula of Mexico to the Channel Islands. Most of today's population occupies the rugged eastern shore of Guadalupe Island, 140 miles west of northern Baja, California. The animal is sometimes seen off Southern California near San Miguel, Islas San Benito, San Clemente, and San Nicholas Islands.

SOUTH COAST MISSING LINKAGES PROJECT

This project by the conservation organization South Coast Wildlands aims to maintain and restore connections between wildlands in Southern California. The linkages provide essential travel routes for wide-ranging species like mountain lions and bighorn sheep, and offer refuge for some of Southern California's most rare and imperiled animals and plants.

Maintaining these connections between natural areas will promote the long-term health of the state's land, water and air. If these linkages are lost, the biological integrity of several thousand square miles of southern California's best wildlands will be irreversibly jeopardized.

More information: scwildlands.org

- I Tehachapi Linkage
Location: Los Angeles & Kern counties
The Tehachapis have been described as a "biogeographic crossroads" and are home to a stunning variety of plant and animal life including mountain lion, San Joaquin kit fox and burrowing owl.
II Santa Monica - Sierra Madre Linkage
Location: Los Angeles & Ventura counties
The linkage is comprised of a rich mosaic of oak woodland, savanna, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grasslands, riparian forests and woodlands that serve species such as mountain lion and mule deer.
III San Gabriel - San Bernardino Linkage
Location: Los Angeles & Riverside counties
This linkage facilitates wildlife movement between Cleveland and San Bernardino National forests and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and overlaps portions of the Cahulla and Santa Rosa reservations. Elements of coastal and desert habitats occur side by side in many areas of this linkage, serving wildlife such as mountain lion and mule deer.
IV San Bernardino - Granite Linkage
Location: San Bernardino county
Bighorn sheep roam this area, and an extremely rare alkali seep supports two imperiled plant species, the salt spring checkerbloom and Parish's alkali grass.
V San Bernardino - Little San Bernardino Linkage
Location: San Bernardino & Riverside counties
In this landscape of predominantly dry vegetation, the desert oases provide essential resources that attract mountain lion, badger and bighorn sheep as well as rare aquatic species.
VI Palomar - San Jacinto - Santa Rosa Linkage
Location: Riverside & San Diego counties
This linkage facilitates wildlife movement between Cleveland and San Bernardino National forests and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and overlaps portions of the Cahulla and Santa Rosa reservations. Elements of coastal and desert habitats occur side by side in many areas of this linkage, serving wildlife such as mountain lion and mule deer.
VII Santa Ana - Palomar Linkage
Location: San Diego & Riverside counties
Recent studies have shown that if this linkage is severed, mountain lions will likely become extinct in the Santa Ana Mountains.
VIII Peninsular - Anza Borrego Linkage
Location: San Diego & Imperial counties
The linkage contains many rare and sensitive natural communities, including coastal sage scrub, grassland, meadow, palm oasis, coast live oak forest and Engelmann oak woodland, which provide habitat for species such as mountain lion and black-tailed jackrabbit.
IX Parque-to-Park Linkage
Location: Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego & Imperial counties; & Parque Constitución de 1857, in Baja California
Completing this linkage will allow the endangered Bighorn Sheep to repopulate the Sierra Juárez in northern Baja, and encourage bi-national collaboration in managing sheep and other wildlife populations.

MUSEUMS

- 1 George C. Page Museum
Located at the Rancho La Brea Tar Pits, visitors to the Page Museum can learn about what Los Angeles was like 40,000 to 10,000 years ago. The museum includes fossils, a window-lined laboratory and outside, life-size replicas of extinct mammals.
2 Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
In addition to exhibits on dinosaurs, insects, and California history, megafauna-related displays include the North American and African mammal halls. On July 11, 2010, the new Age of Mammals exhibition opens inside the remodeled historic 1913 museum building.
3 San Bernardino Museum of Natural History
Founded in 1952, this regional museum includes exhibits and collections in cultural and natural history, including a live animal center, a mammal hall and a citrus grove.
4 Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
Founded in 1916, the museum features 12 exhibition halls, including a blue whale skeleton and a series of dioramas illustrating birds, mammals and Southern California habitats.
5 San Diego Natural History Museum
Tracing its history to a group of amateur naturalists in 1874, the museum displays a collection of fossils tracing the 75-million year timeline of Southern and Baja California.
6 Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology
Located on the campus of Webb High School, the Alf is the only paleontology museum in the country that is located in a high school. Established in 1936, the museum features two exhibition floors and is named after a Webb High School teacher who took students on fossil-collecting trips in the 1930s.
7 Western Science Center
Permanent displays include paleontological and archaeological artifacts from the Diamond Valley Lake site that range from 230,000 years ago to the present.

ZOOS

- 1 Los Angeles Zoo
The first Los Angeles Zoo opened in 1912, and moved to its current location in 1966. The zoo features more than 1,000 animals, including large mammals such as elephants, hippos, jaguar, a Sumatran tiger, and an Indian rhinoceros.
2 San Diego Zoo & Wild Animal Park
One of the largest zoos in the world, the facility has more than 4,000 animals from 800 species. Growing out of a 1915 exotic animal display, the zoo has had a permanent home in Balboa Park since 1921. In 2009, the zoo opened Elephant Odyssey, a 2.5 acre exhibit that explores what Southern California looked like 12,000 years ago.
3 Aquarium of the Pacific
Opened in 1998, the aquarium has a collection of more than 11,000 animals from 600 different species, including a display featuring seals and sea lions.
4 Santa Ana Zoo
Located in Prentice Park in Santa Ana, the zoo opened in 1952 on land donated by Joseph Prentice, who stipulated that at least 50 monkeys must be on display at all times. The zoo maintains an extensive primate collection with almost 20 species from around the world.
5 Moonridge Animal Park and Zoo
This small zoo in Big Bear focuses on alpine animals and has 180 animals from 85 species, including black bear, mule deer and a snow leopard.
6 Orange County Zoo
Tracing its roots to a collection of small animal displays in the early 20th century, the current zoo opened in 1985 and focuses on animals and plants from the Southwest.
7 Santa Barbara Zoo
Formerly known as the Child's Estate Zoo, the zoo opened in 1963 and has more than 600 animals, including California condors and capybaras.

PARKS

- 1 Ralph B. Clark Park and Interpretive Center
The rich fossil beds at the park were discovered when sand and gravel was excavated from the area for the construction of the Santa Ana and Riverside Freeways from 1956 to 1973. At the time, it was known as the Emery Borrow Pit. Public demand for preservation led to the County of Orange acquiring the property in 1974, 10,000 years ago the site contained marshes, meadows and oak woodlands and was inhabited by mammoths, sloths and large cats. Today, the park contains recreation and picnic areas, and an interpretive center.
2 Rainbow Basin, Barstow Fossil Bed
A National Natural Landmark, these fossil beds are located eight miles north of Barstow in the Mojave Desert. Managed by the Bureau of Land Management, it is accessible to the public via an unpaved road. The rock formations and fossil beds date to the middle Miocene epoch, or between 12 and 16 million years ago. Scientific collecting permits are required to excavate or recover any fossils in this area.

ANIMAL SANCTUARIES

- 1 California Wildlife Center
P.O. Box 2022, Malibu, CA 90265 | (818) 222-2658 | californiawildlifecenter.org
2 Gibbon Conservation Center
P.O. Box 800249, Santa Clarita, CA 91380 USA | (661) 296-2737 | gibboncenter.org
3 Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary
29322 Modjeska Canyon Road, Silverado, CA 92676 | (714) 449-2760 | nsm.fullerton.edu/tucker
4 Wildlife Waystation
14831 Little Tujunga Canyon Road, Sylmar, CA 91342 | (818) 899-5201 | wildlifewaystation.org