



# HABITAT PRESERVATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWERS

There are many things that tower developers can do to preserve habitat and reduce habitat fragmentation and disturbance.

## WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

Many species of wildlife depend on continuous, uninterrupted tracts of habitat to meet their survival needs. Historically, the natural landscape featured many types of connected and continuous habitats that blended into one another. Wildlife were able to easily travel between different areas by following these patches of land. For some types of animals, their required habitat areas can be smaller than the living room in your house. For other wildlife, a 100-foot wide patch of forest may connect a food source with a den site. The development of a new tower compound or access road, which may seem inconsequential in size, can have a dramatic effect on the survival of the wildlife that live and breed in these special habitat areas.

## HABITAT DISTURBANCE

Habitat that is changed in some way is considered disturbed; habitat is considered fragmented when it is broken up into smaller patches that are isolated from one another. Fragmentation can arise from many causes: a new highway may divide a previously undisturbed prairie habitat; a housing development may remove forested habitat and change the water temperature of a nearby stream; the access road to a new lattice tower may act as a barrier to frogs trying to reach wetland pools. Regardless of the cause, disturbed and fragmented habitat poses challenges to the wildlife that depend on that landscape to survive.

## TOWER DEVELOPMENT and MINIMIZING HABITAT DISTURBANCE

Although construction and development, by its very nature, means that habitat is being replaced by human expansion, there are several things that

tower developers can do to reduce a new tower's impact on the surrounding habitat:

- Whenever possible, locate the new tower in a previously disturbed area, such as in an agricultural field or near a powerline corridor.
- Avoid siting towers in locations that have natural, native habitat such as parks or forested lands. When building near trees, remain outside of the dripline to avoid damaging the tree's roots.
- Instead of constructing new roads, use existing roads for site access. If a new road is necessary, attempt to retain continuous habitats. For example, allowing the tree canopy to remain connected over the roadway will benefit arboreal species.
- If landscaping is part of your project, using native plant species will reduce your maintenance costs and provide new habitat for wildlife.

Other options may exist for reducing habitat disturbance and fragmentation. Consulting with a biologist during project development will help you choose the project design that best reduces impacts to wildlife and their habitat they depend on.

- **Wildlife depend on high-quality habitat for survival.**
- **Minimizing habitat disturbance is beneficial for wildlife.**
- **Tower developers can do many things to help reduce impacts to habitat, including siting towers in previously disturbed locations, using existing infrastructure, and using native vegetation in landscaping.**

*Black Mountain Consulting LLC is a Pacific Northwest-based environmental consulting and engineering firm that prides itself on high quality service and client education.*