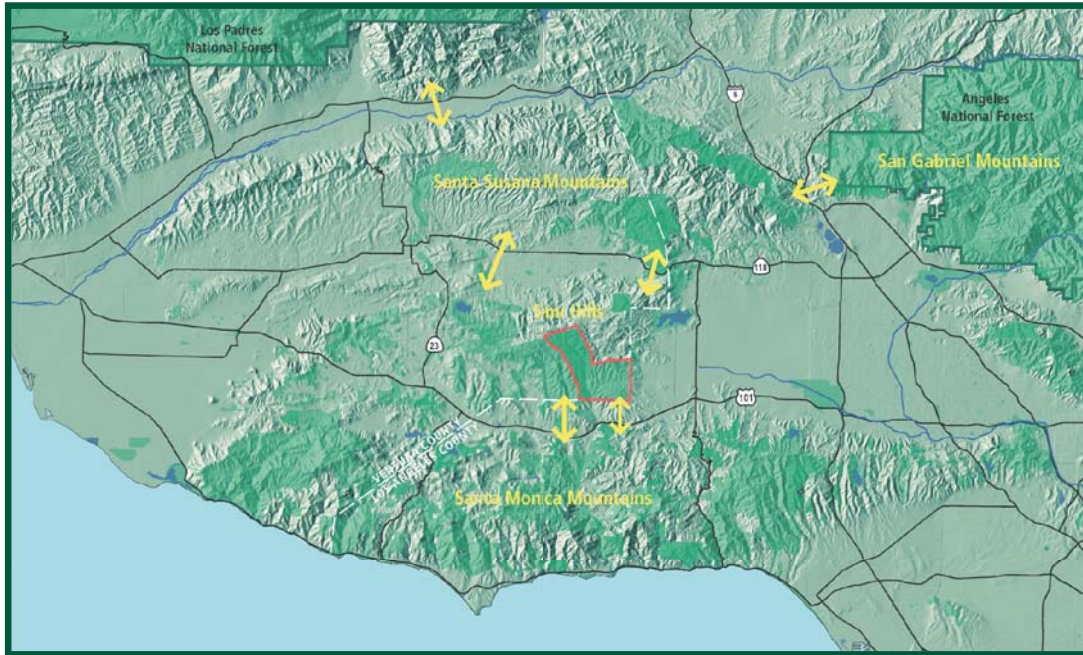


# The Santa Susana Mountains, Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains: A Mediterranean Ecosystem Spanning Two Counties



## Simi Hills—A Fundamental Ecosystem Element

The Simi Hills provide the only stepping stone for wildlife to replenish populations in the approximately 200 square mile Santa Monica Mountains ecosystem. However, to continue this function effectively, the Simi Hills must ultimately contain enough protected habitat to maintain small populations of badgers, mountain lions, bobcats, grey fox, long-tailed weasels, and mule deer. Equally important, the few remaining habitat linkages to freeway undercrossings must be adequately protected. The Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve is fundamental to both these habitat protection objectives. However, much of the Simi Hills core habitat remains unprotected.

## Highest Quality Core Habitat and Water Resources that Must Be Protected

Commissioned by the National Park Service in 1989, renowned conservation biologist, Dr. Michael Soulé, prepared minimum viable population analyses for target species in the Simi Hills, Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Susana Mountains. He concluded that existing sub-populations of mountain lions, badgers, grey fox and bobcats were too small to be self sustaining. The infusion of new animals into all of the ranges is essential. The Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve contains high quality habitat for all of the target species. Its rich resources include over twenty miles of USGS blue line drainage courses, three well-dispersed year-round water sources, gentle terrain, deep soils, and over 4,000 oak and walnut trees. The park's water sources serve wildlife populations in the southeastern quarter of Simi Hills core habitat.