Thousands of scientists endorse study on border wall's threat to wildlife

BY JACQUELINE THOMSEN
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Thousands of scientists have endorsed research finding that President Trump's proposed wall on the U.S.-Mexico border would harm biodiversity in the region.

Earther reported that as of Wednesday, more than 2,700 scientists have signed onto the study "Nature Divided, Scientists United: US-Mexico Border Wall Threatens Biodiversity and Binational Conservation." The report was published Tuesday in the peer-reviewed scientific journal BioScience. More than 2,500 scientists had signed on at the time of its publication.

The paper found that efforts to build the wall "threaten some of the continent's most biologically diverse regions," and that the already constructed segments of the wall "are reducing the area, quality, and connectivity of plant and animal habitats and are compromising more than a century of binational investment in conservation."

The research found that a wall would likely cut animals off from parts of their habitats, including endangered species like the Peninsular bighorn sheep and the Mexican gray wolf, and could impact those species' ability to help grow their populations.

And the study's authors also argue that the wall could impact scientific research itself, which they call "especially concerning given that the waiving of environmental laws means independent research may provide the best source of scientific insight into the wall's impacts on biodiversity."

"We call on fellow scientists to join us in expressing unified concern over the border wall's negative impacts on wildlife, habitat, and binational collaboration in conservation and -scientific research," the paper reads.

Lead author of the study Rob Peters, a biologist at Defenders of Wildlife, told Earther that the number of signatories for the research "is strong validation of how disastrous the wall would be." Scientists do not typically sign onto each others' research.

Trump has long pushed to build a wall on the U.S.'s southern border, promising that Mexico will pay for the wall. Mexico has said that it will not pay for the wall.