



The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair  
The Honorable Chris Gorsek and Sherrie Sprenger, Vice-Chairs  
Oregon House Committee on Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE, Salem Oregon 97301

March 14, 2019

Dear Chairman Witt and members of the House Committee on Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 2834. My name is Don Moore and I am the director of the Oregon Zoo.

The Oregon Zoo is dedicated to the welfare and conservation of Oregon's native species as well as imperiled wildlife around the world. In addition to our hands-on work restoring populations of California condors, coastal butterflies and western pond turtles, we welcome more than 1.5 million visitors each year to the zoo who come because they are fascinated by, and care about, wildlife. By offering up-close encounters with wildlife at the zoo and through our expansive social media reach, we educate millions of people about the issues facing wildlife, including our own native species, and we encourage them to help us address these issues.

Many people recognize that large animals like deer and elk are frequently on the move. They may not realize how many other species move through the landscape, whether migrating over vast areas—think rufous hummingbirds, vaux swifts and monarch butterflies--or by simply moving from dryer upland habitat to a wet aquatic one to a breed or carry out other life processes. These miniature migrations are essential for healthy populations of Pacific tree frogs and Oregon red legged frogs, for example.

How many of you brake when your headlamp illuminates a tiny hopping creature in the road on a spring evening? This used to be a reliable spring ritual in Oregon but sadly, many of us recognize this doesn't happen as often anymore. And many of you may have read about the effort on Highway 30 northwest of Portland where, in order to connect red-legged frogs in Forest Park with their breeding areas along the Columbia River, volunteers ferry them in buckets across this busy four-lane highway.

Migration pathways, large and small, have been in use by Oregon's mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and birds for millennia. Human society, by constructing roads and housing developments, cultivating fields or even just by concentrating human activity, has disrupted many of these ancient and critically important migration routes. When animals cannot move through the landscape, they cannot reach important food sources or maintain genetic diversity and healthy populations.

As you know, wildlife species face significant challenges around the globe as a result of human activity. Their greatest threat is habitat loss whether to human development, fragmentation, or forces like climate change. "Barriers to animal movement" is identified as a Key Conservation Issue in Oregon's Conservation Strategy.

The Oregon Zoo believes development of tools to better understand wildlife migration is long overdue and a plan to accommodate their movement is essential to their conservation. We support the actions identified in House Bill 2834. We commend ODFW and the Oregon Habitat Connectivity Consortium for their work to date. A mandate from the legislature will move the planning process along and we encourage elected officials to provide the necessary resources to make this happen.

Fortunately, there has been some excellent work done by scientists and conservation organizations, including the Metro Regional Habitat Connectivity Working Group of which our own agency, Metro, has had an active role. We encourage a deep collaboration between these groups.

A statewide approach using consistent criteria and protocols just makes sense. We obviously share concern for highway safety and encourage actions that will avoid collisions between vehicles and large animals. We know that ODOT has taken creative action to prevent animal collisions and there are great models that are highly effective. We strongly urge expansion of these efforts and to address the needs of smaller animals that pose little risk to humans but face substantial risk in crossing barriers, whether they be roads, farm fields, housing developments or soccer fields.

Let's face it. Oregon should be a model for states across the country in protecting and sustaining our natural heritage. The Oregon Zoo applauds this essential effort to support the health of Oregon's wildlife populations and to maintain our state's rich biodiversity.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Dr. Don Moore  
Director, Oregon Zoo