

Hello, my name is Maia Black, I am the Executive Director of the Selberg Institute, a conservation organization located in Southern Oregon.

I am honored to be here today in front of Chairman Witt and the Committee to speak in support of HB 2834.

Our organization manages thousands of acres of private lands, in the Southern Cascade and Klamath-Siskiyou regions, for conservation, wildlife habitat and connectivity. This area is known worldwide for its outstanding biological diversity, as well as being an eco-regional junction point, often referred to as the Cascade-Siskiyou “land bridge”. These unique features were federally recognized in June of 2000 by President Clinton with the proclamation of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, the only monument established specifically to preserve and protect biodiversity.

Linkage corridors, like the Cascade-Siskiyou “land bridge” are crucial for species dispersal, seasonal migration, enabling access to more suitable habitats, locating high quality forage or prey, sustaining healthy genetic exchanges and accommodating range shifts due to climate change.

However, in the face of burgeoning ecosystem stressors- primarily habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as a changing climate – maintaining functional connectivity across this landscape is becoming increasingly critical for the long-term viability of wildlife populations, promoting resilient ecosystem processes, and ensuring adequate resource availability for future generations.

The Interstate 5 is one of the biggest barriers to functional connectivity in our region. I live in the Colestin Valley, and have driven the stretch of the I-5 corridor over the Siskiyou Summit almost everyday, most days – twice a day – for the last 18 years. As a result, I have seen countless species, including deer, bear, coyote, cougar, birds, and others I couldn’t even recognize, lying dead on the side of the road. I have witnessed close calls, as well as collisions, and I can honestly say I do not believe that the ODOT wildlife collision data for this area is accurate.

I am hopeful that the legislation proposed in this bill will direct ODFW and ODOT to work together in further assessing these important linkage areas, finally creating a Wildlife Corridor and Safe Road Crossing Action Plan with a strategy for implementing wildlife crossings in order increase habitat connectivity, human safety and mitigate wildlife mortality and the adverse economic impacts caused from collisions.

Thank you!

Maia Black
Executive Director
Selebrg Institute