



The Honorable Michael Dembrow  
Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE, Salem Oregon 97301

### **Oregon Zoo testimony in support of House Bill 2834-A**

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

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 who come to the zoo because they are fascinated by, and care about, wildlife. We enjoy the support of more than 42,000 member households, families who regularly visit and participate in the zoo's many educational programs. 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.

As you know, wildlife species face significant challenges around the globe as a result of human activity. Their greatest threat is loss of habitat, whether it is destroyed or broken into smaller and smaller isolated fragments by human development and resource extraction, or altered by forces like climate change. Those of us who have watched the Netflix series "Our Planet" or read the United Nations report on biodiversity and ecosystem services released last week recognize that we are in a crisis, that our lives depend upon maintaining the planet's rich biodiversity and that all of us must take action to support species survival in a rapidly changing world.

This is work we need to do right here in Oregon. House Bill 2834-A is an important step in that direction and the Oregon Zoo is solidly behind this legislation.

Oregon's animals have used established wildlife corridors 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 pathways. When animals face barriers to movement they cannot reach important food sources, maintain genetic diversity or support healthy populations. "Barriers to animal movement" is identified as a Key Conservation Issue in Oregon's Conservation Strategy. Many of the species of concern identified in the strategy face these challenges.

We know that as the planet warms, as we see more large-scale wildfires, as water temperature and availability changes, wildlife will be forced to move. The species that survive will be those that remain resilient and we can help.

House Bill 2834-A will provide the essential information needed to identify critical migration routes and remove barriers. We are pleased that the legislation in its current form will help improve highway safety for both drivers and large animals. We are also pleased that it is inclusive of smaller species that may not

pose safety risks to humans but cannot dash through traffic. We also support the collaboration between agencies--a key component of this legislation.

We commend ODFW and the Oregon Habitat Connectivity Consortium for their work to date, including a commitment to collaboration and to making results widely available and accessible to practitioners to aid decision making, whether by staff of public agencies or members of the private sector. We feel that 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 excellent work done by scientists and conservation organizations, including the Metro Regional Habitat Connectivity Working Group of which our own agency, Metro, plays an active role. They have developed methods for identifying representative species and models for mapping their dispersal patterns and habitat needs. We encourage a deep collaboration between these groups.

A statewide approach, using consistent criteria and protocols, makes sense. Oregonians treasure our rich array of wildlife species. The Oregon Zoo believes that development of tools to better understand wildlife migration and a plan to accommodate species movement is long overdue and essential to their conservation.

Thank you.

Marcia Sinclair

Government Relations and Policy Advisor  
Oregon Zoo  
marcia.sinclair@oregonzoo.org  
(503) 525-4200