

Testimony in support of HB 4134 (1.25% for Wildlife) by Ray Temple 3 Feb 2026

Please support passage of HB 1431 (1.25% for Wildlife). This bill will address a decades-old conundrum for ODFW, and aid a host of programs that touch agriculture, poaching enforcement, outdoor recreation and several other interests. In ORS 496.04(19) ODFW is given responsibility for managing mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and shellfish. In ORS 496.012 ODFW is given a series of co-equal goals for the management of these species; no distinction is made between goals for hunted, angled, or commercially valuable species and management of the species that will benefit from passage of this bill. However, management of hunted, angled and commercially valuable species has longstanding funding sources while the remainder do not. In fact, management of those wildlife species has been chronically underfunded for decades. The wildlife have suffered, as has ODFW's standing with the conservation community.

I grew up near Charleston, spending much of my time fishing, birding, and exploring nature and natural history in the woods, lakes, streams and shores of Coos Bay. Those interests translated into a career as a fish biologist and program manager in Oregon. In retirement my wife and I make our couple of acres friendly to all wildlife and participate in citizen science projects in natural history. I was lucky to be the Board President of the Salem Audubon Society when it funded much of the establishment of the Ankeny Hill Nature Center in collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Friends of the Mid-Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. In all of these endeavors I have met many like-minded Oregonians and have seen a growing public interest in learning and maintaining our natural history.

Over more than 50 years I have seen wildlife habitats diminished by wildfires, development, pesticides, invasive species, industrial forestry, and a general lack of awareness as to the scope of these losses and its consequences. In addition, declining Federal funding has much reduced the ability of organizations and individuals in re-establishing native plant communities that once supported many of the species at risk today. The problem is growing but a stable funding source is not yet available that would allow ODFW to play its intended conservation role.

We know more about the status of birds than other, less obvious, taxa but mostly that knowledge is about loss. Billions of birds are lost every year to habitat destruction, predation by house cats, and striking building windows. Below that scale, the knowledge is piecemeal. Understanding the status and conservation need of native reptiles and amphibians, small mammals, and many native fishes is likewise fragmented. Passage of HB 4134 and funding Oregon's State Wildlife Action Plan will finally allow ODFW to exercise the full scope of its authorities and responsibilities for management and conservation of wildlife.

Please pass HB 4134.