

I strongly support HB 4134—the 1.25% for wildlife bill. What is Oregon without tidepool life, sea lions, seals, and great flocks of nesting seabirds on rocky coastal islands? What is Oregon without otters, beaver, bull trout, and belted kingfishers I know from time on the Metolius and Deschutes Rivers? What is Oregon without salamanders, and tree frogs in the moist forests? What is Oregon without sage grouse dancing on leks at dawn in the prairie? What is Oregon without fishers, pine martens, flying squirrels, and mysterious tree voles that dwell high in ancient trees? What is Oregon without protecting wildlife corridors and creating over and underpasses to keep animals and drivers safe?

We have the chance today to assure Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has a much greater ability to study, monitor, restore, and protect the full spectrum of our state's wildlife heritage. More than 300 species of vulnerable and imperiled wildlife are identified in ODFW's state wildlife action plan—now called "Oregon is Worth Protecting." Oregon's "species of greatest conservation need" face risks from pollution, climate change, invasive species, and barriers to migration. Some are imperiled and others we know so little about, we could lose them before understanding their habitat needs. We have incredible biodiversity in our state—and so much to lose if we don't act.

To raise the state lodging tax by a mere 1.25 % is nothing in comparison to what we will lose if we do not. Right now, we have the third lowest lodging tax in the nation. Raising it 1.25 % means we still will have the third lowest lodging tax. For so little, we will gain so much—and assure we have the quality of life and natural beauty that is why people live here, work here, and come to visit. It's all about the wildlife—and the habitats that support them.

Early on in my career I served as the state nongame information specialist for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. That position evolved to be called the Watchable Wildlife coordinator. I saw firsthand the struggle to raise funds for the hundreds of species that are not hunted or fished for. And I also met hundreds of caring people who volunteered and did their best to help with limited means.

In the 1990s, I served as the communications coordinator for a national campaign called Teaming with Wildlife, led by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. We advocated for a small user fee on binoculars, birdseed, and outdoor gear to raise critical funding for state wildlife agencies and tribal governments. We aimed to follow in the successful steps of the Pittman-Roberston Act of 1937 that put the same kind of user fee, an excise tax, on archery gear, guns, and ammunition. Officially called the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, this wildly popular legislation gave the state wildlife agencies the means to bring back dwindling populations of deer, elk, hunted waterfowl, and other game species, including restoring and conserving their habitats. The Dingell-Johnson Act of 1950 extended the excise tax to fishing gear and again was incredibly popular for restoring fish and rivers, lakes, and ponds.

We were not successful with the user fee campaign—but it did draw attention to the tremendous needs and threats to thousands of species and the inability of millions of people who care about wildlife to chip in effectively. We began to realize that it's a common good for all of us to support fish and wildlife conservation for states and tribes, and in partnership with federal funding. The outcome was the State Wildlife Grants (still often known as Teaming with Wildlife) program that started in 2000. The grant program requires state matching funding, which is often challenging to raise. The needs are also far greater than the grants provide and amounts are uncertain from year to year. I was involved again recently in

writing wildlife blogs for National Wildlife Federation to support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, which came very close to being enacted in 2022 and with strong bipartisan support—passing the US House of Representatives by a vote of 231-90, and unfortunately did not get through the Senate for a final vote before the end of that session. The act would have provided \$1.4 billion annually to be divided among states (in a similar way to the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson acts), and with requirements for state matches.

This history is important to understand with the current administration's attacks on the Endangered Species Act, and on wildlife habitats at every level. It's critical that Oregon step up—we in the state have the power to do that. This is not a Democrat vs Republican issue. We all care about our wildlife—and when we do act on behalf of species that can't speak for themselves we are helping protect our clean drinking water, pollinators for foods, bats that control insects, and the future of a key economic driver for our state—outdoor recreation, a \$16 billion industry in Oregon. It's common sense to invest in the reason people live here and visit.

While the majority of the funding from the 1.25% of lodging tax will come from out-of-state visitors, I am happy to pay a few more dollars for the future of what makes Oregon the state I fell in love with when I moved here first in 1977 to attend University of Oregon-- with unforgettable semesters at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

Today, I am a conservation and natural history author. I rely on our state's wildlife and wild places for a living. I often volunteer to advocate for our threatened species and habitats. To be passionate about our native wildlife is to be fully alive in wonder. I care deeply about the full spectrum of wildlife, the delicate ecological relationships we are still seeking to understand, and the splendid habitats we are so lucky to know in Oregon—from coasts to Cascades to high desert and the Blue Mountains stretching from the Ochocos to the Wallowas. In this time of stress from weather extremes caused by climate change, and the high level of threats to our public lands, waters, and the air we breathe, we cannot delay. Pass HB 4143 now. Be a shining beacon for all other states to follow. We can do this!

Thank you,  
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