



KALMIOPSIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1265 • Port Orford OR • 97465

February 25, 2026

Honorable Chair Meek, Vice-Chair McLane, and members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, based in Curry County on Oregon's South Coast. Our group has more than 400 members who cherish our state's birds, fish and wildlife. For that reason, we strongly support of HB 4134 to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% in order to help recover Oregon's most vulnerable birds, fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

Our corner of the state hosts many of our state's iconic yet imperiled species—such as the Tufted Puffin, and we'd like to see Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) have the capacity engage more proactively and meaningfully to help conserve our at-risk birds, fish, and other wildlife. This is especially important right now given uncertainties around federal wildlife conservation funding. ODFW needs a sustainable funding source.

Increasing Oregon's statewide lodging tax, currently one of the lowest in the country— by just a small amount—would provide a sustainable source of funds to ODFW to help recover Oregon's most imperiled wildlife species and enhance biodiversity, which also contributes to Oregon's tourism and outdoor recreation economy.

The most recent studies related to the economic values of recreational watching wildlife is the U.S. F&WS, 2022, *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Related Recreation*, which determined that there are 96.3 million birders in America and an estimated 42.6 million birders that made trips out-of-state to watch birds. Nationally, wildlife watching accounted for recreational expenditures of a staggering \$250.2 billion—far greater than hunting and fishing. The previous iteration of this study (2016) had documented a trend of increasing interest in wildlife watching—though a change in methodology with the most recent study makes direct comparison with previous numbers no longer possible. The most recent economic data specifically for recreational wildlife watching in Oregon is older —a report commissioned by ODFW and Travel Oregon from 2009 (Dean Runyan Associates, *Fishing, Hunting, Wildlife Viewing, and Shellfishing in Oregon, 2008 State and County Expenditure Estimates*). At that time travel-generated expenditures for recreational wildlife viewing on Oregon's Coast accounted for \$165 million. That translates to more than \$248 million in 2026 dollars. Although we don't

regard generating economic activity as a primary function of wildlife conservation, it is important to underscore that it makes good economic sense to make public investments in wildlife conservation. Adding just \$1.25 for a \$100 hotel room would provide a solid, sustainable investment in the very reason so many visitors travel to Oregon and would help ensure our cherished wildlife can survive into the future.

Given multiple stresses faced by imperiled wildlife, we urge you to please support this proactive, forward-thinking bill in this legislative session!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Vileisis". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ann Vileisis

President, Kalmiopsis Audubon Society