

Submitter: Scott R Bowler

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

One of the big draws for our family, and I know for a great number of residents and visitors to Central Oregon, is our beautiful and pristine outdoor environment. Most everyone would agree that their trip to Central Oregon is enhanced greatly by sighting wildlife. I'm sure we've all seen cars stopped along the highway, gazing at a herd of elk off the distance, or a few deer trying to cross one of the streets in town. When hiking we marvel at beaver dams, or a porcupine up in a pine tree, or a falcon hunting dinner. These are relatively common species, but Oregon is home to many other, less common critters as well. Recent work by the state has shown a great number of our native species are declining. Habitat loss is the biggest threat, but vehicle impacts, poaching, wildfires, and displacement, are other reasons that certain species of wildlife may be having trouble. But the biggest of these is habitat loss and displacement.

Oregonians now have a great chance to change that: currently working its way through the legislature, again, is a bill that nearly passed last year. HB 4134 would add a 1.25% fee on lodging across the state (from the current \$1.50 to \$2.75). The money would then go towards funding work in habitat enhancement and species protection across the state. On \$100 hotel room, an extra \$1.25 charge won't have much impact. Yes, there will be people who squawk "no new taxes!" However, a modest fee levied on visitors who come here to see nature and enjoy wildlife isn't much to ask. It's true that hunting and fishing license fees also go to support wildlife, as does an optional checkbox on our state income tax. None of these fees, however, would specifically target imperiled wildlife and enhancement of their critical habitats.

Thank you for supporting this vital bill --it's a very modest ask for a very large return for our cherished and often imperiled wildlife!