



Committee on State and Local Government
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 10, 2025

RE: LD 567, An Act to Designate the 2nd Week of May as Dark Sky Week

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Salisbury, and Members of the SLG Committee:

My name is Francesca “Ches” Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon’s Director of Advocacy. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 567, *An Act to Designate the 2nd Week of May as Dark Sky Week*.

Artificial lighting produces a broad range of ecological impacts. Wasteful and unnecessary lighting can produce demonstrable effects on the behavior and population ecology of wildlife. Like humans, animals and plants live by a rhythm that is attuned to our planet’s 24-hour lightness and darkness cycle. Similar to what humans experience when their circadian rhythms are disrupted (such as when they change time zones and during daylight savings time), wildlife experience a disorientation of time when there is too much artificial light at night. This “disorientation” has population-level impacts and is fairly easily avoided.

Many species of birds migrate or hunt at night, making them extremely vulnerable to bright lights in areas that are naturally dark. Artificial night light can disrupt important visual cues, causing migrating birds to wander off course and either never reach their intended destination or reduce their energy stores that are needed to arrive at their final destination.¹ As species’ populations begin to drop or as once-common animal species become less common, it is imperative to consider the cumulative impacts of the many threats to Maine’s natural resources – *artificial lighting is one of those many threats*.

Maine is privileged with dark skies, a precious natural resource increasingly rare in our modern world. In addition to protecting ecosystems, dark skies help foster a deeper connection to nature. The exciting celestial events of last year, April’s solar eclipse and Northern Lights events, inspired tens of thousands of Mainers to get outside to witness these dazzling displays for themselves. What’s more, they

¹ Catherine Rich and Travis Longcore, eds., *Ecological Consequences of Artificial Night Lighting* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), Chapter 4.



demonstrated that people outside of Maine are willing to travel and to spend in order to witness an astronomical phenomenon that they cannot experience at home. Both the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument and the Appalachian Mountain Club's property in Piscataquis County have been recognized by Dark Sky International for the quality of their night skies.

This growing appreciation of dark skies as a unique natural resource will only augment by establishing, as suggested by the sponsor, *two* Dark Sky Weeks in Maine – both of which would coincide with peak fall and spring bird migration, potentially expanding the impact of this proposal beyond the positive educational awareness and economic impacts to actively helping preserve darkness critical to migrating birds.

As light pollution around the globe is becoming a critical issue for both people and wildlife, LD 567 would help shine a light on this issue by establishing the second week of May as “Dark Sky Week” – and, hopefully, the second week of September. **It is with great enthusiasm that we encourage the committee to support the LD 567.** We appreciate Senator Guerin for putting this bill forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum".

Francesca “Ches” Gundrum
Director of Advocacy