



Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

February 10, 2021

**RE: LD 199, An Act To Amend Certain Fish and Wildlife Laws and Related Provisions**

Dear Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony neither for nor against LD 199, An Act To Amend Certain Fish and Wildlife Laws and Related Provisions, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members and supporters.

Maine Audubon's comments are limited to Section 1 of the bill, which would define "Upland game species" as "bobwhite quail, gray squirrel, porcupine, ring-necked pheasant, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, spruce grouse and woodchuck." Specifically, we recommend removing "spruce grouse" from the proposed definition.

Spruce Grouse stood out to Maine Audubon because there is no hunting season in Maine for this species, while every other species on the proposed list has an open hunting season of some length. We understand, based on conversations with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife staff, that they do not intend to open a hunting season for Spruce Grouse. However, we are concerned that listing "spruce grouse" as an "upland *game* species" (emphasis added), may be confusing to those seeking to learn and understand Maine's hunting laws.

Spruce Grouse are projected to lose between 50% and 86% of their total habitat due to climate change, including all their habitat in Maine, even under the most conservative climate modeling. Preliminary results from the current Maine Bird Atlas survey show that there has been a contraction of the species range since Maine's first atlas survey in 1982. These birds were once widespread in Maine (found in every county, except York and Cumberland), but their population has declined significantly due to hunting and habitat loss. Spruce Grouse were hunted in Maine between 1915 and 1940, a period towards the end of which the Spruce Grouse's population decrease was so steady that state biologists urged ending all hunting of the species immediately.

In order to avoid confusion as to whether there is a hunting season for this vulnerable species, we recommend that "spruce grouse" be removed from the proposed definition for "Upland game species". Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eliza Donoghue". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E'.

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.  
Director of Advocacy