



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

April 7, 2021

**RE: LD 1012, An Act To Fund Wildlife Rehabilitators**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 1012, An Act To Fund Wildlife Rehabilitators, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members and supporters.

LD 1012 would create a new “wildlife rehabilitation” project category for funding available through the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund (MOHF). The category represents 10% of available annual grant money and would reallocate funding from the existing “Habitat Conservation” and “Endangered and Threatened Species Conservation” project categories. The proposed “wildlife rehabilitation” category would fund the rehabilitation of species (1) adversely affected due to lack of management or habitat loss; (2) adversely affected due to unusual vulnerability to man-made disturbances and special or limited habitat types; (3) endangered and threatened species; and (4) fish and wildlife of statewide or regional significance, as well as education concerning native wildlife. While Maine Audubon has tremendous respect for the work of Maine’s wildlife rehabilitation community, we believe the MOHF’s limited funding has the greatest impact and is most effective when used as it is today, for fisheries, wildlife, habitat, and endangered and threatened species conservation; public lands access; and natural resources law enforcement.

The painstaking work of caring for sick or injured wildlife plays an important role within the broad suite of wildlife conservation strategies. In particular, Maine-based organizations like Avian Haven and the Center for Wildlife play a crucial role educating the public on the value of wildlife and fostering support for wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Caring for sick or injured endangered or threatened wildlife species is particularly painstaking, knowing that the individual in hand is one of a very limited population. However, in Maine Audubon’s experience, tending an individual rarely positively impacts the overall populations that natural resource agencies and other wildlife organizations seek to protect and increase. Many individuals that arrive at wildlife rehabilitation facilities cannot be saved and many others can never be released back into the wild and contribute to the population.

Maine Audubon is fortunate to have worked with several rehabilitators on our Coastal Birds Project when they have taken in injured endangered Piping Plovers. We are incredibly grateful to the endless efforts our excellent wildlife rehabilitators put into these individuals, but we see firsthand that the only place where plovers can really thrive is on the beach. Vulnerable species like Piping Plovers are notoriously challenging to keep alive in captivity, and though we have had excellent care-takers enable a couple individuals back into the wild over the years, we are acutely aware that habitat-based challenges are what keeps Piping Plovers on the endangered species list.

When Maine Audubon and the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine worked to create the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund in 1994, we considered this very question: whether to make funds available for wildlife rehabilitation. We decided then that it was not the most strategic use of this limited pool of funds and continue to feel the same way today, particularly as lottery revenues (the sole funding source for MOHF) have declined.

For these reasons, we recommend that the Committee vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1012. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eliza Donoghue".

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.  
Director of Advocacy