

Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

January 27, 2025

RE: LD 95, An Act to Amend and Simplify Certain Wildlife Laws

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Roberts, and Members of the IFW 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 95, *An Act to Amend and Simplify Certain Wildlife Laws*.

Maine Audubon supports the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife’s (DIFW) suggested changes to Chapter 925, Subchapter 3, §12804, *Conservation of endangered species*. We concur with both the minor, clarifying updates to the language and including “species of special concern” (SSC) locations on the Freedom of Access Act records exemption list.

A species of special concern is any species of fish or wildlife that does not meet the criteria of an endangered or threatened species but is particularly vulnerable, and could easily become, an endangered, threatened, or extirpated species due to restricted distribution, low or declining numbers, specialized habitat needs or limits, or other factors. With recent adjustments in the list this fall, there are currently more than hundred SSC.

In order to allow DIFW and conservation partners the ability to adequately address conservation needs of vulnerable species, affording these species the same protections as endangered and threatened species is critical. Protecting the location information of SSC is important to their conservation because revealing their whereabouts could lead to increased poaching, habitat destruction, and other human disturbances, raising the risk of additional population decline. **We strongly encourage the Committee to support this bill.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Francesca “Ches” Gundrum
Director of Advocacy