

Sandra Scholar
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LD 439

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on LD 439, "An Act to Preserve Maine's Sporting Heritage and Enhance Sporting Opportunities for Maine's Youth by Allowing Maine's Youth to Hunt on Sunday." This bill would allow Sunday hunting by those persons who hold a valid junior hunting license or by persons 18 years of age who are enrolled in secondary school and hold a valid hunting license.

Enjoyment of Maine's bountiful and beautiful natural areas is a right of all Maine citizens, both those who enjoy consumptive uses such as fishing and hunting, and those who enjoy non-consumptive activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and bird watching.

I enjoy hiking, especially in the fall. Hiking in Maine in the fall is spectacular -- cool crisp air, glorious colors as the leaves change, and opportunities to see uncommon species of birds moving through on their fall migration south. I especially enjoy hiking on Sundays, because it is the one and only day of the week when I can do so secure in the knowledge that I do not have to worry about hunters nearby, or hearing gunshots, and fear for my safety from a stray bullet.

Most hunters are friendly and courteous fellow outdoor enthusiasts and I have no issue with them, but I and my friends who also like to hike and bird-watch have had some bad and seriously scary encounters. Hiking during the week with a friend, I once encountered a hunter who was angry that we "chased his deer away" because we were talking as we hiked. A friend hiking with her leashed dog was threatened by a hunter who said he would shoot her dog because the dog barked and chased the game away.

I recognize that Maine is a largely rural state with a long tradition of hunting, and I respect that. But please, for me and many other non-consumptive users of Maine's natural areas -- the hikers, bikers, bird watchers, kayakers, canoeists, and many others -- allow us one stress-free, gunshot-free day to enjoy the quiet beauty of Maine's natural areas. One day out of seven does not seem too much to ask.

I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 439.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Scholar