



MONTANA AUDUBON

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Testimony on HB 160 33
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
January 15, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janet Ellis and I'm here today representing Montana Audubon. We oppose this bill for the following reasons:

- Currently there are approximately 1,100 "incidents" each year with large predators, half of which involve black bears, and 190 of which involve grizzly bears. We feel this bill will particularly impact these species. Having FWP destroy about 600 black bears a year and up to 190 grizzlies would significantly impact these wildlife populations.
- This bill does not define what an "immediate threat to human safety" is. Consequently, this phrase could have widespread interpretations. Is seeing a wolf cross a meadow in a rural area an immediate threat? How about a mountain lion or bear? What if the person who owns the meadow has children? *This situation is ambiguous at best.*
- This bill does ^{not} take into account any responsibility for people who live in rural areas, but do not take responsibility for their actions—actions that might attract large predators, particularly bears. If people owning beehives were required to have electric fences around the hives, then perhaps this bill would make sense. But there is no such law. If people who own chickens (which are considered livestock in this bill) are required to keep their chickens in a bear-proof chicken coop, then perhaps this bill would make sense. However, there is no such law.
- Currently we have professionals who investigate each of the incidents between predators, people, and livestock. These individuals then make a professional call, based on local circumstances, on whether or not the predator needs to be destroyed. HB 160 33 takes the professional judgment out of the system—and basically requires destruction of every predator. This cookie cutter approach does not make sense to us. In Montana, wildlife professionals do a very good job of being responsive. That doesn't mean mistakes don't get made—but they are few and far between.
- We believe passage of this bill would prevent grizzly bears from being taken off the Endangered Species List and managed as a game animal in Montana.

For these reasons, we ask that you vote against HB 160 33.