



**New Jersey Chapter
The Wildlife Society**

<http://wildlife.org/new-jersey/>



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April 14, 2021

The Honorable Bob Smith
216 Stelton Rd.
Suite E-5
Piscataway, NJ 08854

RE: Senate Bill S2640 (A4324)

Dear Senate Environment and Energy Committee:

The New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society (NJTWS) is writing to express our strong opposition to introduced bill, S2640, that would require protection for feral monk parakeet (*Myiopsitta spp.*) by the Department of Environmental Protection “in the same manner and to the same extent as any nongame species of bird indigenous to the State that is protected by the The Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act.” Additionally, the bill would require that the non-native monk parakeet not be considered or listed by the Department of Environmental Protection or any other State agency as a “potentially dangerous species.”

From a conservation and resource management perspective, we are deeply concerned about the intent of this bill. The language presented in the proposed legislation undermines nationwide efforts of the broader scientific community that largely opposes the protection and promulgation of feral and invasive species. One of the leading threats to North America’s biodiversity are risks posed by non-native species. Estimates of the environmental and economic costs of invasive species in the United States are approximately \$120 billion per year (Pimental et al. 2005). This bill would be in direct opposition to the conservation efforts and existing legislation that is currently in place to protect our indigenous species.

Additionally, requiring protective status for a non-native, feral species sets a dangerous precedent for the future of wildlife conservation. With the loss of 2.9 billion birds in North America since 1970 (Rosenberg et al. 2019), it is imperative that state, federal, and non-governmental conservation

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organizations focus limited resources to prioritize management and monitoring efforts toward native bird species, especially those designated with threatened and endangered status.

We value policy decisions that are informed by science and adamantly support a blend of science and policy as the strongest foundation for future legislation. The bill requires that the monk parakeet not be listed as a “potentially dangerous species” but provides no science-based justification for this decision. Although the species may provide aesthetic and/or emotional value for some citizens, disregarding the potential ecological risks of the feral monk parakeet could cost the state money and potentially imperil New Jersey’s native plant and animals through resource competition.

Our concerns and viewpoints are further supported in the attached statement published by The Wildlife Society™ entitled “Invasive and Feral Species.” NJTWS encourages the Committee to consider the deleterious effects of granting a non-native, feral species the same protection as some of NJ’s most vulnerable and at-risk species.

If you have any questions about the mission of NJTWS and our opposition this bill, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ciuizio Freiday, CWB®
President
New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society

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