

I would like to thank the Environmental Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5315 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION OF THE HABITUATION OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS, THE POSTING OF INFORMATIONAL NOTICES CONCERNING ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE AND THE STATUS OF SNAPPING TURTLES UNDER STATE LAW."

I care about animals and appreciate nature. This bill needs to be supported in order to preserve our natural ecosystems and protect animals who co-exist with us. I am an avid hiker, and I know that it's important to respect wild animals by leaving them alone. However, in an era of social media, this common sense knowledge is not always apparent.

Recently, an endangered baby dolphin in Argentina was killed when beachgoers pulled her from the water and passed her around to take selfies (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2016/02/18/endangered-baby-dolphin-dies-after-swimmers-pass-it-around-for-selfies/>). Their fanatic disregard for this animal's life for the sake of a photo op could have been prevented through education. It is the same circumstance that led two innocent bears in Burlington's Sessions Woods to be killed by the DEEP back in September, 2015. A woman's viral video captured their curiosity and led to their identification and assessment as "aggressive" by the DEEP. Had she followed proper bear encounter protocol, this tragic result could have been avoided.

Posting prominent signage that clearly delineates what to do when one observes wildlife will help protect animals as well as people. This proactive legislation would help minimize human vs. bear encounters, and save lives as a result.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

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