

Environment Committee members,

When will the assaults on other species end? When will a piece of proposed legislation like S.B. No. 348, which would "authorize the hunting of coyotes at night," be viewed as the sickening gift to the recreationally violent that it is? Let's be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that S.B. No. 348 serves no purpose other than to give hunters more freedom to visit cruelty on other species — in this case, coyotes. Bears, too, are once again in hunters' crosshairs. It comes as no surprise that H.B. No. 5358, which would "authorize the hunting of black bear in Litchfield County," trains its focus on a region that's largely represented in the state Senate by Environment Committee co-chair Craig Miner, who, last year, introduced S.B. 522, which sought to "authorize bear hunting in Connecticut." Hunting apologists never tire of trying to strike fear in the minds of residents, never tire of vilifying wildlife for merely existing, never tire of demonizing other species for daring to walk out of fictional nightmares and into neighborhoods that belong as much to them as to us.

That public-safety is made a concern as hunting apologists promote legislation like S.B. No. 348 and H.B. No. 5358 is as absurd as it is deeply twisted. The notion that other species should play by our rules is a terribly arrogant one. And the notion that our species should "manage" others is a monstrous extension of that arrogance. There is no altruism in slaughter, no matter what insulting, self-serving rationalizations the hunting community perpetuates. H.B. No. 5366, which would "authorize the bow hunting of deer on private property on Sundays throughout the state rather than only in deer management zones," would be yet another gift to the recreationally violent. When will it end? When will our species embrace the opportunity to coexist peacefully with wildlife? When will we emphatically say "no" to arming the recreationally violent with more opportunity to visit cruelty on other species? We should reject H.B. No. 5365, which would "authorize the establishment of lifetime hunting and fishing licenses," with the same impassioned reason with which we reject S.B. No. 348, H.B. No. 5358, and H.B. No. 5366. We should and can enthusiastically protect other species' interests — just as we should and can protect, through thoughtful common sense, the domesticated animals with whom we share our lives.

We refer to domesticated animals as family. Let's treat them that way. H.B. No. 5367, which would "convene a working group to examine the prevalence of vicious dog attacks in the state and develop recommendations for how to reduce the number of such attacks and how to mitigate the effects of disposal orders for such attacking animals on municipalities and the state," is loaded with awful, callous, and, frankly, discriminatory thinking. Let's hold ourselves to much higher standards of compassion, understanding, and patience. We should aspire to create a state in which nobody is "disposed of," a state that chooses rehabilitation over retribution. We should absolutely not be considering punitive legislation that simply seeks to make senseless executions easier. Sickeningly, we're already "disposing of" animals who languish too long in shelters — "disposing of" them simply to make room for others, while that supply is maintained by breeders for profit. Let's treat that root problem, and let's keep the interests of the animals who are here with us at the very forefront of our minds.

In talking about regional animal shelters (S.B. No. 349), also, we should keep the focus on animals' interests. And in talking about the establishment of "certain requirements for what constitutes adequate shelter for a dog" (H.B. No. 5355) and about shelter adequacy in general (H.B. No. 5362), let's think about what's adequate for members of our families. This stuff isn't complicated. It's a matter of what other species deserve from us. Snapping turtles and red-eared slider turtles (H.B. No. 5354) deserve to be left alone in their natural habitats, so let's leave them alone. Horseshoe crabs (H.B. No. 5364), too, deserve to be left alone, so let's leave them alone. Let's leave all wildlife alone, including those species "harvested," needlessly, for food (S.B. No. 344, H.B. No. 5359, and H.B. No. 5361).

Let's treat other species with the compassion and respect with which we expect to be treated.

With urgency and neighborliness,
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