NH AUDUBON

Protecting New Hampshire's natural environment for wildlife and for people.

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February 3, 2026

The Honorable Judy Aron
House Environment and Agriculture Committee
Granite Place Room 153
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Comments regarding HB 1054 establishing a committee to study the decline of insect populations in New Hampshire.

Dear Chair Aron and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 1054 on behalf of NH Audubon. We are a statewide conservation organization dedicated to protecting New Hampshire's environment for wildlife and for people.

HB 1054 establishes a committee to study the decline of insect populations in New Hampshire. Insects are the largest and most diverse group of species on earth. Various species quietly provide critical ecological services. Native bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, moths, and beetles provide critical pollination of native and cultivated plants alike. Beetles, fly larvae, ants, and earwigs break down dead plants and animals and animal wastes, playing key roles in decomposition and nutrient cycling. Ants are important seed dispersers in New England forests. Predatory and parasitic species, including various beetles, bugs, and parasitic wasps, help to control insect pests. In addition to these crucial activities, insects provide a major food source for animals higher on the food chain, including fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals.

Research showing evidence of insect declines began to gain wide media attention during the second decade of the 21st century. While regional declines of some species groups (e.g., native bees, butterflies, dragonflies) have been well documented, particularly in Europe, the breadth and depth of the phenomenon across this diverse taxonomic class remain unclear.

Recognized factors (e.g., habitat loss, pesticide use, night lighting) contributing to insect declines are at play in New Hampshire as elsewhere in the world. Documented population declines of bird species that feed on flying insects in New Hampshire and anecdotal observations of the decreasing need to remove dead insects from vehicle windshields provide evidence that insect declines are occurring here.

We applaud efforts to learn more about the ecological and economic roles of insects in New Hampshire and potential strategies for reducing negative effects of human activities on insect populations in the State. However, little to no New Hampshire-specific data exists from which to assess current insect populations, much less population trends. We encourage the Committee to consider a broader approach to education on this issue. A list of actions at state, municipal, and personal levels that can reduce risks to insect populations would be an important step toward protecting these species and their critical ecological services in New Hampshire.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 1054. We urge the Committee to consider these comments during their deliberations on HB 1054.

Sincerely,

Carol R. Foss, Ph.D.
Senior Advisor for Science and Policy

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