



15 October 2025

Dear Senator,

As a lifelong conservation scientist, constituent, and Executive Director of Wildlife for All, I am writing to urge you to support H.J.Res. 111 and S.J.Res. 69, to stop the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's deeply flawed plan to kill hundreds of thousands of barred owls in an attempt to help spotted owls. It is unconscionable to kill native wildlife that are well-suited to survive human-dominated landscapes, especially when we have not done enough to protect and restore habitat and are orchestrating a mass extinction. We can—and must—do better for both spotted and barred owls.

I hold a Ph.D. in wildlife management from Michigan State University and have spent over two decades working across research, government, and nonprofit sectors on wildlife policy, ecology, and coexistence. I have authored more than 30 scientific publications and have worked from the National Park Service to state agencies and major conservation organizations to advance evidence-based, ethical wildlife management. As a scientist and constituent, I strongly oppose this lethal control plan on both scientific and moral grounds.

The decline of spotted owls is a tragedy of human making — driven by habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation, not by barred owls. Clearcutting and industrial land use have destroyed the old-growth forests that both spotted owls depend on. Killing barred owls does nothing to address these ultimate causes. It merely treats one symptom, not the disease, and diverts resources from the urgent need to restore and protect habitat.

In my own research ([Lute & Attari 2016, Environmental Conservation](#)), my colleagues and I found that the American public readily understands this distinction between proximate and ultimate causes of conservation problems, including the barred and spotted owl case. People intuitively grasp that killing one native species to make up for our habitat mismanagement is ineffective and ethically wrong. They expect wildlife policies that address root causes and uphold humane, science-based values.



The current plan to shoot nearly half a million barred owls over coming decades would not halt the spotted owl's decline. It would, however, waste enormous public resources, perpetuate ecological disruption, and commit ongoing cruelty against a native species simply trying to survive in the altered landscapes we created. This approach represents a failure of both ecological integrity and moral responsibility.

A better path forward is clear: restore and reconnect old-growth forests, mitigate climate and land-use impacts, and reform wildlife governance to prioritize habitat protection and coexistence. Such investments will support not only spotted and barred owls but the full web of life that depends on healthy habitats.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support H.J.Res. 111 and S.J.Res. 69. These resolutions represent a necessary course correction — affirming that conservation should be rooted in science, ethics, and humility, not in endless killing of the very wildlife we claim to protect.

Thank you for your leadership and for standing for effective, humane, and evidence-based conservation on behalf of your constituents and our shared natural heritage.

Respectfully,

Michelle L. Lute, PhD
Executive Director | Wildlife for All