



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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**DESIGNATE THE RUFFED GROUSE
AS THE STATE GAME BIRD**

**House Bill 4286 as introduced
First Analysis (5-13-03)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Doug Spade
Committee: Conservation and Outdoor
Recreation**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Throughout the years the state has adopted various objects, animals, and plants as official state symbols. As the magazine *Michigan History* says, Michigan’s symbols “represent the state in a colorful and special way”. In addition to the state flag, coat-of-arms, and seal, the state’s officially designated symbols include: a flower (the apple blossom); a bird (the American robin); a tree (the white pine); a stone (the Petoskey stone); a gem (chlorastrolite, also known as Isle Royale greenstone); a fish (the brook trout); a type of soil (the Kalkaska soil series); a reptile (the painted turtle); a game mammal (the white-tailed deer); a wildflower (the dwarf lake iris); and a fossil (the mastodon). Conspicuously absent from this list, given Michigan’s abundant wildlife and rich hunting tradition, is a state game bird.

The “ruffed grouse” has a significant presence here in Michigan, particularly in areas with large tracts of public land, as it is found largely in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula. The ruffed grouse is also one of several small game birds permitted to be hunted in the state. The Department of Natural Resources reports that each year the ruffed grouse (and the American woodcock) are pursued by approximately 125,000 hunters. The DNR also notes that surveys indicate that hunters spend an average of seven to eight days hunting the game birds each year, adding up to approximately a million days of recreation in the state. Some believe that the ruffed grouse should be designated as the state’s game bird.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create a new act to designate the ruffed grouse (*bonasa umbellus*) as Michigan’s official game bird.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Other recent proposals for state symbols include: a state dog (the golden retriever); a state children’s

book (*The Legend of Sleeping Bear*); an insect (the green darner dragonfly); an agricultural insect (the honeybee); a waltz (the “Wolverine Waltz”); a state burger (the cherry burger); and a state amphibian (the marbled salamander).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Fiscal information is not yet available.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

While naming official state symbols may seem rather pointless to some, particularly in light of the current budget difficulties, naming the ruffed grouse as the official state game bird does have larger public policy implications. As recent DNR reports indicate, the hunting of these game birds is quite popular among hunters. Designating a state game bird raises people’s awareness of the bird and the opportunities to hunt them or simply observe them in their habitat. This, undoubtedly, has a positive economic impact on the state given the vast amount of money spent by hunters for licensee fees, hunting supplies, and other local goods and services. Further, the bill raises the public’s awareness of the ruffed grouse and its habitat, thereby educating residents on the need for continued conservation efforts and support for the state’s natural resources. Some people also point out that hunting the ruffed grouse is an art not easy to learn without help. The mentoring of novice grouse hunters, they say, provides an excellent opportunity for families to spend time together and for the teaching not only of hunting but also of ecology and respect for nature, and personal responsibility and respect for the law.

Against:

State symbols, in general, are designed to draw attention to something unique about the state or to

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aspects of Michigan life in which state residents can take particular pride. Adding state symbols to an already lengthy list of symbols could very well render existing state symbols less consequential.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Hunting Dog Federation supports the bill. (5-7-03)

The Department of Natural Resources has indicated a position of neutrality on the bill. (5-7-03)

Analyst: M. Wolf

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.