



February 28, 2023

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB0979 Agriculture-Invasive Plant Species -Regulation (Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act**

**Position: Support HB0979**

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) strongly supports HB0979, and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill would prohibit the sale of several non-native, invasive plant species in Maryland, and establish protocols for listing additional prohibited invasive species.

MOS supports this bill because invasive species are one of the causes of the decline of our native bird species. North America has lost 29% of its birds since 1970<sup>1</sup>, with invasive plant species as one of the causes.

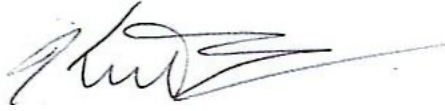
Non-native, invasive species, lacking predators, can crowd out native plant species. Furthermore, they have not evolved with native fauna, so have fewer and less diverse insect communities. In one case, a study done in Maryland showed that as non-native plants increased both the availability of insects and population growth of Carolina Chickadees declined. Sustainable populations would disappear if non-native plants exceed 30% of biomass.<sup>2</sup> Native berries, fruits, seeds, and the insects that eat those plants are all food sources needed by our birds. Abundant, digestible caterpillars from native oaks and cherries are fed to countless nestlings every spring. Native flowering plants also support pollinators, such as butterflies, moths, and bees. Monarch butterfly, which depends on native milkweeds as a host plant, is also in steep decline.

The Maryland Invasive Species Council (MISC) in 2018 listed 249 species of non-naïve invasive terrestrial plants in the State of Maryland. MISC noted that the species environmental or economic harm in Maryland or the wider Mid-Atlantic region. The Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act would also put limits on several aquatic plant species.

The preservation of our biodiversity, birds, and other wildlife depends on limiting the impact of non-native plant species. This bill would be an important step in combatting non-native plant species.

MOS requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB0979.

Sincerely,



Kurt R. Schwarz  
Conservation Chair Emeritus  
Maryland Ornithological Society  
[www.mdbirds.org](http://www.mdbirds.org)

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- <sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, Kenneth V. et al, Decline of the North American avifauna, Science, VOL 366, NO. 6451, 19 September 2019,  
[https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313?adobe\\_mc=MCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1707754028](https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313?adobe_mc=MCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1707754028)
- <sup>2</sup> Desiree L, Narango, Douglas W. Tallamy, and Peter Marra, Nonnative plants reduce population growth of an insectivorous bird, PNAS, Vol. 115, No. 45, October 22, 2018, <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1809259115>