



January 26, 2021

**SB0223: Plastic Bag Reductions Act**

**Position: Support: SB0223**

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) asks that the Senate Finance Committee give a favorable report of SB0223 and move it to the full House of Delegates.

Plastics present a serious threat to bird life, as well as other wildlife. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, plastic marine debris has been found in 86% of sea turtles, 44% of seabirds, and 43% of marine mammals. Once consumed, this plastic debris can cause internal and external wounds, impair feeding by blockage of the digestive system, decrease mobility and the ability to avoid predation, and prove toxic. It can also reduce body weight, inhibit fat deposition, and reduce reproductive capacity.<sup>1</sup> The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration commissioned the National Park Service and Clemson University to quantify microplastics on National Park beaches from 2015 to 2017. Thirty-seven beaches in 35 National Parks, Monuments, Seashores, and Recreation Areas were sampled and microplastics and microfibers were found at all 37 beaches. Microfibers made up 97% of the debris found. Microplastics and microfibers were found even on remote Alaskan beaches.<sup>2</sup>

Single-use plastic bags are a significant source of plastic debris. We have all seen them stuck in trees, fences, along road ways, which demonstrates just how far they can travel, winding up in streams, rivers, the Chesapeake Bay, and ultimately the ocean.

Our bird populations are in steep decline. A recent study showed that North America lost 3 billion birds, 29% of its total bird population, since the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Plastic pollution adds to that toll on our birdlife. As we have noted before, it is especially acute in the marine environment. Many of our members travel to Ocean City, in particular in the winter months, the deep off-season, to observe such species at Long-tailed and Harlequin Ducks, King and Common Eider, Red-throated and

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<sup>1</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, Impacts of Mismanaged Trash, July 30, 2020, <https://www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters/impacts-mismanaged-trash#plastic>

<sup>2</sup> NOAA Marine Debris Program, Quantification of Microplastics on National Park Beaches, January 22, 2021, <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/reports/quantification-microplastics-national-park-beaches>

<sup>3</sup> Rosenberg, et al, Decline of the North American Avifauna, *Science*, vol 366, issue 6461, pp. 120-124, 4 October 2019, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120>

Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, gulls, Alcids such as Razorbill and Dovekie, and Purple Sandpiper. In warmer months, we seek the comical American Oystercatcher, herons and egrets, and the federally threatened Piping Plover. Birders are a substantial economic force, an estimated 900,000 residents and non-residents enjoy birding in the state. While Marylanders generated \$483 million from wildlife-watching activities in 2011, the Total Industrial Output (TIO), which includes, direct, indirect, and induced effects, totaled over \$909 million, produced 10,807 full- and part-time jobs, and generated \$88.4 million in state and local tax revenue. Nationally, Americans who watch and feed birds contribute \$41 billion to the nation's economy every year.<sup>4</sup>

Single-use plastic bags present a substantial threat to Maryland Wildlife and throughout the world. And they are an ugly eyesore wherever the winds take them. We therefore ask you to favorably report the bill and move it to the Senate Floor. And once before the full Senate, that you continue to support and pass the Plastic Bag Reduction Act (SB0223).

MOS is a Maryland-based volunteer organization of some 1200 members, with 15 chapters in Maryland. We are devoted to the study and preservation of birds and their habitat.

Sincerely,



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<sup>4</sup> US Fish and Wildlife Service, Economic Impact: Birds, Birdwatching and the U.S. Economy, November 16, 2017, <https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/bird-watching/valuing-birds.php>