MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

February 28, 2023

Bill: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/HB0957

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB0405 Outdoor Lighting and Use of State Funds

Position: Support SB0405

The Maryland Ornithological Society MOS strongly supports SB0405, and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill would require the State to develop outdoor lighting standards that take into consideration environmental risks, and would forbid use of state funds to install or replace certain outdoor lights (luminaires) on any state park, trail, or highway that did not meet certain standards. These standards would essentially direct light downward, and otherwise mitigate light pollution.

We support efforts to mitigate light pollution because it contributes to death of millions of birds per year worldwide. Light pollution can interfere with migration, blotting out the stars, which in part help bird to migrate. In foggy conditions, artificial light can lure migrating birds, causing disorientation and collision.[1] A dramatic case occurred in Chicago at McCormick Place Lakeside Center on October 10, 2023. Over 900 migrating birds were killed flying into the building that night, in part, due to bright, unshielded light.[2]

Aside from mass killings, and migration going awry, light pollution has prompted some species to nest as much as a month earlier than typical. This can lead to a disconnect between when chicks hatch, and when insect prey emerges. This can reduce the fledging of young, is sufficient food is not available for chicks.[3]

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[1] Light Pollution Threatens Birds across the World, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Bonn, 14 Ma7 2022, https://www.cms.int/en/news/world-migratory-bird-day-light-pollution-threatens-birds-across-world-solutions-are-readily

[2] Sottie, Zoe, More than 1,000 birds killed in one night after hitting the same Chicago building, CNN, October 10, 2023, https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/10/us/dead-birds-chicago-building-scn-trnd/index.html

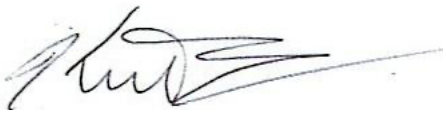
[3] Henry, Rachel, Noise and Light Pollution From Humans Alter Bird Reproduction, NASA, Global Climate Change, December 3, 2020. https://climate.nasa.gov/news/3047/noise-and-light-pollution-from-humans-alter-bird-reproduction/

Curiously, the Maryland General Assembly instituted a task force to study lighting efficiency and light pollution in Maryland. That task force recognized light pollution as a threat to migrating birds.[4] It is not clear which, if any, of the task force recommendations have been implemented.

Birds crashing into buildings is a well known problem in Maryland. Lights Out Baltimore has documented over 7000 birds dead or injured in Baltimore since 2008, rescuing 2500 birds and 127 bats.[5] An average of 450 birds are found per year. Multiple this across the landscape to grasp the scale of carnage from collisions. Up to a billion birds per year from collisions with windows.[6]

North America has lost almost 30% of its birds since 1970.[7] Reducing light pollution will help mitigate one of the many threats faces by our declining bird populations. MOS as the Committee to issue a favorable report for SB0405.

Sincerely,



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[4] Task Force to Study Lighting Efficiency and Light Pollution in Maryland, March 2002, https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/000000/000008/unrestricted/20030006e.pdf

[5] Lights Out Baltimore, https://www.lightsoutbaltimore.org/index.html

[6] Loss, Scott R., et al Bird-building collisions in the United State: Estimates of annual mortality and species vulnerability, The Condor, Volume 116, Issue 1, 1 February 2014, https://academic.oup.com/condor/article/116/1/8/5153098?login=false

[7] 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