



Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Josh Kurtz, Secretary  
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 21, 2024

**BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 778**

**SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES – SUNDAY HUNTING – MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS**

**DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT**

**EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION**

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The Department of Natural Resources supports HB 778 with a technical amendment. The proposed amendment clarifies that the department may authorize Sunday hunting for migratory game birds in all jurisdictions in the state.

In general, the department is in support of making Sundays open for the full spectrum of outdoor sport and recreation under its purview. By providing opportunities to hunt waterfowl and other migratory game birds on Sundays, HB 778 will increase the number of weekend days that most hunters have available to hunt. Maintaining hunter interest, through increased opportunity, is critical to ensuring the future of wildlife management in Maryland. Hunting licenses and stamps are the primary funding source for all wildlife conservation in Maryland. Hunters are also the only reliable and consistent means to manage overabundant bird species like resident Canada and snow geese and other wildlife, including white-tailed and sika deer.

Sunday hunting for migratory game birds is also biologically sustainable with 42 other states currently offering this option. North American migratory game bird populations are among the most heavily monitored and managed in the world. Longstanding population surveys, banding programs, and the other monitoring activities conducted by state and federal governments are more than adequate to detect, and respond to, changes in population status and adjust hunting regulations (i.e. harvest) in response. These regulations, under Federal authority through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, allow states to hunt migratory game birds for a prescribed number of days regardless of Sunday hunting status. There is no scientific evidence to support the idea that Sunday hunting for migratory game birds greatly increases harvest. It is more likely that this option gives hunters, families, and friends more time to get into the field and redistributes harvest throughout the Federally prescribed hunting season.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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Sunday hunting for migratory game birds is currently prohibited in Maryland. Sunday hunting was first allowed in Maryland in 2003 for deer in certain counties and on certain Sundays. Since then, it has gradually expanded to include additional species (wild turkey and small game) and more Sundays during the annual hunting season. Migratory game birds are currently the only game species that are not permitted to be hunted on Sundays in the state. The option was included as an amendment in SB327/HB983 during the 2023 legislative session but was removed during the deliberative process.

**BILL EXPLANATION**

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HB 778 would authorize the department to open Sundays for migratory game bird hunting, including waterfowl and other migratory game birds.

BY:

(To be offered in the Environment and Transportation Committee)

AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 778  
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 12 strike “Section 10-410(a)(13)” and substitute “Section 10-410(a)(12) and (13)”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, in line 2, after “(a)” insert:

“(12) Except as provided in paragraphs (8) through [(10)] **11 AND 13** of this subsection and subject to paragraph (7) of this subsection, a person may not hunt on Sunday in:

- (i) Baltimore City;
- (ii) Baltimore County;
- (iii) Howard County; or
- (iv) Prince George's County.”.