



February 17, 2025

Bill: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/hb/hb0731F.pdf>

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on HB0731 Wildlife—Protections and Highway Crossings

Position: Favorable

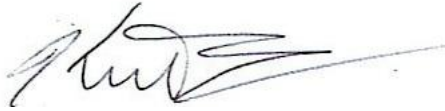
The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) supports HB0731. HB0731 will establish a Maryland Connectivity Coalition, which will be tasked with fostering collaboration between State and Federal agencies, as well as non-governmental organization to combat habitat fragmentation and reduce collisions between vehicles and wildlife.

Highways and roads fragment habitat, so that wildlife often cannot cross between fragments, or if it does, does so at risk of death. We have all seen the numerous road-killed white-tailed deer, raccoons, red foxes, opossums, and cottontail rabbits that are frequently killed along our highways. I personally have seen at least four road-killed Barred Owls, and one Eastern Screech-Owl.

Habitat fragmentation is a serious threat to our declining Forest-Interior Dwelling bird Species (FIDS) such as Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. These species are very hesitant to cross a gap in forest, such as a road or highway would create. All three species are considered by Maryland as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).¹ A properly-made wildlife crossing would allow these species to move between forest fragments separated by a highway or road. Fragmentation also reduces the number of safe nesting areas, and increases exposure to predators.

The promotion of wildlife crossings, which will be the Maryland Connectivity Coalition's goal, will also create wildlife corridors, which are vital to establishing resilience to climate change. Populations with safe crossings can freely move to a new location, when old locations become unsuitable due to climate change.

Overall, North America has lost almost 30% of its birds since 1970². Habitat fragmentation is responsible for a large proportion of that loss. Wildlife crossings and corridors will help stem those losses. HB0741 will promote crossings and corridors, indeed, connectivity. For those reasons, we urge the Committee to issue a favorable report for HB0731.



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¹Maryland State Wildlife Action Plan, 2015, Appendix 1a. page 5,

https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/SWAP/SWAP_AppendicesChapter1.pdf

² 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