



Maryland Office
2901 E. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21214

March 11, 2025

To: Maryland House Government and Operations Committee

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland **House Bill 368 – Maryland Native Plant Month**

Audubon Mid-Atlantic and the undersigned Audubon Chapters located throughout Maryland support HB 368. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. The Independent Audubon chapters in Maryland listed below provide programming and education for countless Marylanders about the benefits of birds and bird habitat.

We enthusiastically supports the establishment of a Maryland Native Plant Month. Doing so through HB 368 will advance the protection of birds and our unique landscapes for future generations of Marylanders to benefit from. This bill is good for birds, for people, and for the dynamic ecosystems that make Maryland. It is also the logical next step after this legislature passed the Maryland Biodiversity and Agriculture Act to promote native plants last year.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and climate change. 1/3 of eastern forest and grassland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. Ruby throated hummingbirds have fewer native plants to sustain themselves. Iconic birds such as – the Wood Thrush, American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark and Baltimore Oriole which are in decline across Maryland will benefit from this bill. HB 368 will slow and reverse this trend by drawing attention to and celebrating the benefits of native plants for Maryland’s birds and people through education and outreach about the importance of native plants to our landscapes.

HB 368 is not just for the birds. When native plants are a dominant factor in the landscape all wildlife benefits. Pollinators thrive, beneficial seeds are dispersed, pests are kept in check, and human communities benefit. Native forests, meadows and gardens support local economies throughout the state through ecosystem services, green job training, tourism, and associated industries. Promoting native plants in Maryland is also an investment in a future defined by climate change. We know that forests, grasslands, wetlands, and coastal marshes, and gardens comprising native plants sequester carbon, slow flooding, filter water, and buffer vulnerable communities from increasing risks of climate change-related storm events and sea level rise.

The Science tells us:

- Invasive and exotic plant species provide minimal ecosystem services to birds and other wildlife
- Maryland's unique landscapes and birds are under threat from non-native plants
- Promoting native plants in Maryland's landscapes is a critical step to protecting our state's biodiversity, protecting bird habitat, and keeping Maryland resilient in the face of changing climate

HB 368 and a Native Plant Month will celebrate native plants, protect birds and bird habitat, create a more resilient environment, and support the local Maryland nursery economy. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in habitat conservation, ecosystem preservation, and the protection of birds now and into the future.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Audubon Mid-Atlantic, and:

Audubon Society of Central Maryland

Chesapeake Audubon Society

Prince George's Audubon Society

Southern Maryland Audubon Society