



## MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

March 6, 2026

**Committees: Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB1267- Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center - Zoning Classification (Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act)**

**Position: Support: HB1267**

Dear Chairs Valderrama and Korman, Vice-Chairs Charkoudian and Guyton, and Member of the EMC and ENT Committees:

The Maryland Ornithological Society enthusiastically supports HB1267. The contiguity of both the Patuxent Research Refuge (PRR) and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) have been under attack for over a decade now. This bill would help preserve the open space of over 20,000 acres from development.

The combined area of PRR and BARC has often been referred to as the green lung between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., referring to the ability of this large tract of forest to provide clean air in an otherwise polluted urban environment.

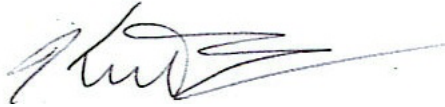
The lands at BARC and PRR have been documented as some of the most biologically diverse and scientifically studied landscapes in the world. The destruction of habitat on these and other adjacent properties that make up contiguous habitat for birds and other wildlife species will impact the continuity and integrity of over a century of environmental research at the Patuxent Research Refuge and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. They have been documented as some of the most biologically diverse and scientifically studied landscapes in the world. At least 261 bird species have been recorded on PRR and 240 at BARC. The species at PRR and BARC include many designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, such as American Kestrel, Whippoorwill, Eastern Meadowlark and Blue-winged Warbler.<sup>1</sup>

PRR and BARC are also important to clean water. Beaver Dam Creek flows through BARC and is a Tier II stream supporting spawning anadromous fish. The Little Patuxent flows through PRR and on to the Chesapeake Bay.

A recent, much-cited, study has shown that North America has lost 3 billion birds, 29% of its total population, since the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Many of the declining bird species depend on unbroken connected habitat. This project will cause fragmentation in the forests of the "green lung.

In light of the value of PRR and BARC as wildlife habitat, and the ecological services they provide for clean air and water, MOS fully supports HB1267 and asks the Committees to issue a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Kurt R. Schwarz  
Conservation Chair Emeritus  
Maryland Ornithological Society

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland State Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025, chapter 3, Maryland's Wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need, pages 39-45, [https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/SWAP/SWAP\\_Chapter3.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/SWAP/SWAP_Chapter3.pdf)

<sup>2</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>