



Maryland Office
2901 E. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21224

March 27, 2026

To: Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment

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

Subject: Support for House Bill 1267, Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1267 to protect important habitat, publicly accessible open space, and natural climate solutions at Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agriculture Research Center. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of the National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies protecting both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Along with the undersigned, independent Audubon Chapters across Maryland, we enthusiastically support HB 1267

Over 400 species of birds rely on Maryland's waterways, forests, marshes, and meadows either year-round or on their annual hemispheric migrations. The habitat at both the Patuxent National Wildlife Research Refuge and the Beltsville Agricultural Center is critical to many of those species, both those that live here year-round, and those that rely on Maryland during their annual hemispheric migration. The forest, meadow, wetland and stream habitats found in Patuxent are vital to the very birds that help define Maryland's identity from the iconic Baltimore Oriole, Great Blue Heron and Bald Eagle to numerous waterfowl and colorful spring warblers and songbirds that come to Maryland on their annual migration. HB 1267 will ensure this habitat stays intact for the birds and people that rely on it.

Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge is a globally and regionally Important Bird Area and therefore should be given significant protection from future detrimental land-uses. In Maryland, Audubon has worked with state and federal agencies to develop recognition of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in every region of the state. IBAs are identified by the National Audubon Society in collaboration with local authorities as places of critical local and hemispheric importance to the survival of resident and migrating birds for the habit they provide. The IBAs in Maryland represent the highest quality remaining habitats for vulnerable bird species. As is the case with Patuxent, these IBAs often overlap with some of our most significant, and most visited natural areas and public lands. IBAs are therefore given the utmost protection from development pressures and are often within or near our most iconic parks and preserved land.

In addition to protecting important habitat in Maryland, HB1267 also supports the already adopted Maryland state goals agreed to in the Irreplaceable Natural Areas Act of 2022, the Maryland The Beautiful Act of 2023, and the newly adopted Sustainable Growth Principles enacted in 2025.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss. 1/3 of all Maryland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. HB 1267 will help reverse this trend and hold Maryland up as a leader in habitat conservation and maintenance of publicly accessible open space.

Sincerely,

Jim Brown, Policy Director
Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Lisa Garrett, President
Prince George's Audubon Society

Julie Dunlap, Advocacy Chair
Audubon Society of Central Maryland

Ben Springer, Advocacy Chair
Southern Maryland Audubon Society