

March 29, 2021

Dear Members of the MD Senate EHEA Committee,

I am the Director of Education at Irvine Nature Center in Owings Mills and have been an avid birder for over four decades. I'm writing to urge you to vote in favor of **House Bill 236, the Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2021**, when the Health & Government Operations Committee meets next week. This bill makes good sense on so many levels; it corrects for one of the myriad ways in which we humans are wreaking havoc on the natural world around us, it reduces energy usage in this era of out-of-control fossil fuel consumption, and that, in turn, will both save our state government money on the costs of heating and cooling its buildings and reduce Maryland's carbon footprint, lessening our impact on the climate. Of course, all of these are desirable results, whose benefits far outweigh any small increase in construction costs associated with using less glass at lower levels of buildings and 'bird-friendly' glass higher up. However, I don't need to convince government officials that using less energy, saving state funds, and slowing global warming are goals worth pursuing. So, let me share just a bit about the cause with which you may be less familiar: the positive impact this bill would have on the avian life of Maryland.

You've probably heard of the bombshell that ornithologists dropped in the fall of 2019, releasing data, based on a massive summary of continent-wide research, which showed that the total number of birds living in North America had dropped nearly 30%—just since 1970. Locally, of the 250 or so bird species that occur regularly in Maryland, well over half are on the decline. While habitat loss/fragmentation, due to suburban sprawl and development, is known by scientists to be the #1 cause of these decreases, far more surprising are their findings that outdoor cats (both feral and pets that are allowed to roam outside) are the second leading cause of avian mortality and, incredibly, windowpanes are third.

I am an occasional blogger about environmental issues on Irvine's website. Over the past year, I've written three blogs related to the dangers that migrating birds face in today's modern world. The links are below; I encourage you to take a look, as the data is beyond alarming. In short, ornithologists estimate that close to 10% of North America's bird population dies each year due to injuries succumbed by flying into windows. Stated another way, on average *every single building* in the U.S. takes the life of two birds annually. The Maryland General Assembly has a critical opportunity, in **House Bill 236**, to set an example--for other states, for future builders in the private sector, and for citizens everywhere who care about nature, specifically birds. We clearly have a long way to go to make amends with Mother Nature, and not much time to do it, but this bill would be a positive step in that direction and would make the statement that responsible, environmentally-conscious development will be the new norm for future generations of Marylanders. Please support the **Sustainable Buildings Act** and help Maryland show that construction projects and environmental concerns can, in fact, go hand-in-hand. That's a hopeful, optimistic message that our young people need—and deserve—to hear at a time when the planet they are inheriting faces many significant challenges.

- <https://www.explorenature.org/blog/the-increasing-number-of-hazards-that-migrating-species-face/>
- <https://www.explorenature.org/blog/how-to-rid-your-home-of-pane-killers/>
- <https://www.explorenature.org/blog/whats-with-the-dots-on-the-windows/>

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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