

Conservation Actions for Desperate Times

By Carol Schreter, Baltimore Bird Club (BBC), April 2017



For a nature lover, these are desperate times. The nation's Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, was the Exxon oil company CEO. He favors resource extraction over protection of the environment. President Trump's proposed budget would cut the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) budget by 31 percent.

Birds, plants and animals cannot speak for themselves. So we nature lovers must take action -- if we want to protect bird habitat. Where do I focus my actions? Where can **YOU** go for direction?

National Actions

For on-line petitions and letters, I pay special attention to one website. Brave employees of the **National Wildlife Refuge Association** send out weekly Action Alerts called "Take Action Tuesdays." Each Alert invites citizens to write some public official -- supporting or protesting something important to the refuge system.

I also want my money to go directly to the **National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges**, to acquire or protect land. At my age, I could buy a Senior Pass for entry, paying a one-time fee of just \$10, useful for the rest of my life. Instead, I pay the annual fee for the annual Duck Stamp, now \$25 a year.

My bigger cash donations go to two non-profit organizations. I figure the best way to protect land is to own it, or to take polluters to court. The **Nature Conservancy** protects land through ownership, or temporary ownership. The **Natural Resources Defense Council** does nothing but legal work, suing national or local actors through the court systems.

When do I put my body on the line, to be counted? I watch the efforts of **350.org** for direction about public gatherings for the environment. For instance, on April 29, 2017, I will join the Peoples Climate Mobilization, a (hopefully) massive crowd at the National Mall. Local gatherings across the nation -- in concert with national gatherings -- are also important these days.

State and Local Actions

State and local actions can counter a negative national scene. Call this "States Rights." Our elected representatives at the county and state level tend to recognize that Maryland's health and economy depend on a healthy Chesapeake Bay. Convey what you think is important, and thank your representatives for doing the right thing.

On-line, for state-wide environmental issues, I watch the **Maryland League of Conservation Voters** for direction. **Audubon Maryland-DC** was also very active on-line this year. Thanks in part to the "Don't Frack Maryland" campaign, the State Legislature voted in March to ban fracking in Maryland. Our Republican Governor even agreed to sign this bill. This is good news for breeding birds in the Western Maryland IBA's (Important Bird Areas).

"**Smart on Pesticides**" is another citizen campaign of import, still active. Maryland is in the leadership in controlling the use and sale of toxic herbicides (such as Round-Up, glyphosates) and pesticides containing neonicotinoids. Both MOS and the Baltimore Bird Club are members of the Smart on Pesticides Coalition and our MOS Conservation Chair Kurt Schwartz has testified in Annapolis on behalf of the "Pollinator" bills.

Protection of habitat in your county might mean watching the local courthouse for zoning issues, and local property developers. The BBC is now

watching with trepidation the proposed Village of Lake Roland, at 6241-47 Falls Rd. near Princeton Sport shop. See the concept plan at www.mfirealty.com/properties/the-village-of-bare-hills/

If the proposed Village of Lake Roland gets approved, we fear that Lake Roland's birds might fly into the glass windows of a 6 – 8 story highrise on the park's edge. We'd like our Lights Out Baltimore volunteers to tell the developer about the risk of bird collisions with glass, and to urge him to install bird-friendly glass at the outset.

Closer to home, plant native plants in your yard. The National Audubon Society has a new on-line database listing native plants for each locale, accessed by providing your zip code.

Want to do more -- during these desperate times? Join the BBC Conservation Committee. We are just 3 – 5 people who meet every 2 or 3 months at my house. This committee is a vehicle for pursuing a topic of personal interest, with support from others.

Now, here is an exercise for everyone. From a comfortable chair, in the comfort of your home. Imagine a desirable society. Yes ... Imagine a Desirable Society. Language -- what you want to see. Say it in words. Share your wishes with others. For me: I want to live in a society where Environmental Protection is the Norm. Ecuador was the first country to recognize the Rights of Nature in its Constitution. Think about that!

We invite you to reproduce and distribute this article.

Conservation Actions for Desperate Times: Resource List

National Wildlife Refuge Association provides Action Alerts
www.refugeassociation.org/action/#/

The Nature Conservancy has national and state-level offices
www.nature.org

Natural Resources Defense Council sues polluters
www.nrdc.org

Mass gatherings, national issues
www.350.org

Maryland League of Conservation Voters, state-level letters & petitions
www.mdlcv.org

Audubon Maryland-DC, Get Involved
www.md.audubon.org/get-involved

Smart on Pesticides Maryland
www.mdpestnet.org/take-action/smart-on-pesticides-maryland/

Lights Out Baltimore
www.lightsoutbaltimore.org

National Audubon Society, native plant database
www.audubon.org/native-plants

Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature
www.therightsofnature.org/ecuador-rights

