



FACT SHEET:  
**THE MARYLAND/D.C.  
BREEDING BIRD ATLAS PROJECT**  
ORGANIZED BY THE MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

- **WHAT:** A project to update the 20-year-old *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*.
- **WHY:** A flourishing bird population is a good indicator of the overall health of the environment. Because birds are readily visible and found in a wide range of habitats, significant natural or human-caused changes to a particular location are quickly reflected in the quantity and variety of birds found there. Maryland, with its forests, fields, mountains, seacoast and magnificent Chesapeake Bay, is an important breeding site for many species of birds. The database and maps resulting from the new Maryland Atlas Project can be compared with the baseline data from the previous Atlas to help planners and researchers measure the success of existing conservation activities and indicate areas in need of more attention.
- **HOW:** Hundreds of volunteers working under professional guidance will gather data on the occurrence and distribution of breeding birds throughout Maryland and the District of Columbia. (Breeding season is the best time to accurately measure bird populations.) Data processing will be handled by the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, a unit of the U.S. Geological Survey, as a pilot project for developing a national standard for computerizing atlas data.
- **WHEN:** Field data will be collected from 2002 through 2006. Each year's data will be made available in electronic form as soon as possible, and a printed Atlas is scheduled to be published in 2008.
- **WHERE:** Maryland and the District of Columbia have been divided into a grid of more than 1,200 "blocks" of approximately 10 square miles each, based on sections of U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps. Efforts will be made to ensure coverage of every block, either by volunteers or by paid professionals.
- **WHO:** The organizer of the Maryland Atlas Project is the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS), a non-profit statewide organization founded in 1945 to promote the study and conservation of birds. MOS planned and organized the previous Atlas in the mid-1980s. For this new Atlas Project, MOS has funded the start-up costs of preparing and printing materials for the field workers. In addition, individual members of MOS are donating significant amounts of time and money. MOS is also seeking grants from a variety of public and private sources to help cover the stipends of a full-time project coordinator and of bird experts hired for quality control.