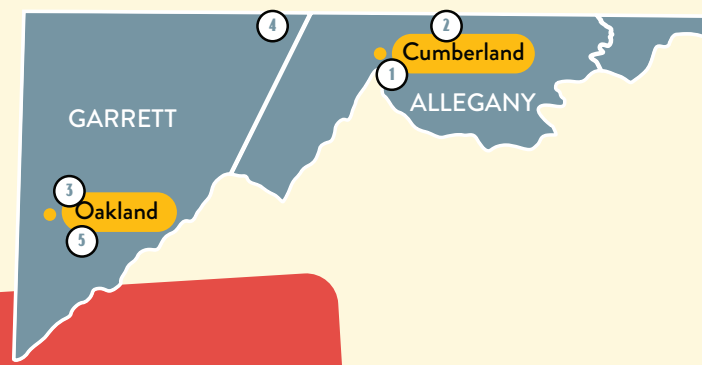


— GUIDE TO —

BIRDING

≈≈≈ IN MARYLAND ≈≈≈



Maryland's Hottest Birding Regions and Species Counts

Listed by region and in order of species count according to eBird.

WESTERN MARYLAND REGION

1. C&O Canal—North Branch
Allegany County (243)
2. Rocky Gap State Park
Allegany County (226)
3. Broadford Lake
Garrett County (222)
4. Piney Reservoir
Garrett County (220)
5. Trout Run Wastewater
Treatment Plant
Garrett County (217)
6. Fort Frederick State Park—
Big Pool
Washington County (210)

CAPITAL REGION

1. C&O Canal – Violette's Lock
Montgomery County (273)
2. Lilypons Water Gardens
Frederick County (257)
3. Hughes Hollow—McKee Beshers
Wildlife Management Area
Montgomery County (252)
4. Beltsville Agricultural
Research Center
Prince George's County (242)
5. Schoolhouse Pond
Prince George's County (237)
6. Merkle Natural Resources
Management Area
Prince George's County (231)

SOUTHERN MARYLAND REGION

1. Point Lookout State Park
St. Mary's County (305)
2. Patuxent River Naval Air
Station (restricted access)
St. Mary's County (292)
3. North Beach—Marsh
Calvert County (260)
4. Flag Ponds Nature Park
Calvert County (245)
5. Harry James Road
St. Mary's County (218)

CENTRAL MARYLAND REGION

1. Sandy Point State Park
Anne Arundel County (301)
2. Hart-Miller Island State Park
Baltimore County (301)
3. Swan Creek Wetlands – Cox
Creek Dredged Material
Containment Facility
Anne Arundel County (284)
4. Swan Harbor Farm Park
Harford County (275)
5. Masonville Cove Environmental
Education Center
Baltimore County (274)
6. Fort Smallwood Park
Anne Arundel County (269)
7. Fort McHenry National
Monument and Historic Shrine
Baltimore County (265)

CENTRAL MARYLAND CONT'D

8. North Point State Park
Baltimore County (264)
9. Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary
Anne Arundel County (259)

EASTERN SHORE REGION

1. Assateague Island National
Seashore and Assateague
State Park
Worcester County (283/272)
2. Blackwater National
Wildlife Refuge
Dorchester County (276)
3. Eastern Neck National
Wildlife Refuge
Kent County (270)
4. Poplar Island
Talbot County (261)
5. Chesapeake Bay
Environmental Center
Queen Anne's County (254)
6. Pickering Creek
Audubon Center
Talbot County (253)
7. Terrapin Nature Park
Queen Anne's County (253)
8. Ocean City—Sunset Park
Worcester County (250)
9. Truitt's Landing
Worcester County (244)



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Welcome

Maryland may only cover a small area of America, but it's top 10 when it comes to birds per square mile. In other words, it's a birder's paradise.

If you're in the northeastern corner of the country and considering a birdwatching adventure, you can't go wrong with Maryland. The diversity of Maryland's natural environments, combined with its central location on the Atlantic Flyway migration path, make the state incredibly fertile ground for birds.

Ranging from coastal barrier islands to swamps, marshes, grassy fields and forests, the bird habitats in Maryland provide for a huge variety of winged wildlife. The state is home to 42 Important Bird Areas, and boasts a remarkable species count for such a small area; 455 species have been documented here, ranging from seabirds to warblers to birds of prey.

The hero of the bunch in Maryland is the Baltimore Oriole, a vibrant orange songbird that is easily spotted throughout the state, and was named the official state bird in 1947.

Maryland also plays host to the largest breeding population of ospreys in the world, and in January 2021, a rare sighting of a Painted Bunting—a technicolor, finch-like beauty, pictured above—at one of the state's parks created quite a buzz.

Birders should also look for Bald Eagles, Prothonotary Warblers and Scarlet Tanagers, as well as the majestic Great Blue Heron, which you can spot anywhere there's water—but try the Chesapeake Bay, where the Heron's silhouette against the tidal marsh will leave a lasting impression.

Spring and fall are peak times for birdwatching in Maryland, as avian flocks undertake their northerly and southerly migrations. In this *Guide to Birding in Maryland*, learn more

about the ornithological bounties of these seasons, including birds you'll spot, some history of the regions and species, and ideal birdwatching localities.

We have also rounded up information from each of the state's birding regions, so you can do a deep dive into the various environments of Maryland and plan your adventure. Check out the hot birding spots map on the previous page, which are where you can find the most species in the state. But remember, wherever you are in Maryland, there's likely a decent number of birds nearby. So, while we hope this guide gives you plenty of inspiration, make sure you get out and explore Maryland for yourself. •



Prothonotary Warbler

Maryland Birding Events

Birding festivals and events are organized to ensure that you visit the best birding spots at the best time of year, meet other birders, see a variety of birds, and learn from the experts. Below are some events that offer the best of birding around the state. As dates and locations can change, please check details before planning your attendance.

Winter Delmarva Birding Weekend

January, Delmarva
delmarvabirding.com

Eagle Festival at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

March, Cambridge
friendsofblackwater.org

Spring Delmarva Birding Weekend

March, Delmarva
delmarvabirding.com

Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival

April, Ocean City
wardmuseum.org

Maryland Ornithological Society Annual Convention

May, location varies annually
mosconvention.org

Audubon's Baltimore Birding Weekend

May, Baltimore
baltimorebirding.com

The Big Sit at Audrey Carroll Sanctuary

October, Mount Airy
centralmdaudubon.org

Waterfowl Festival

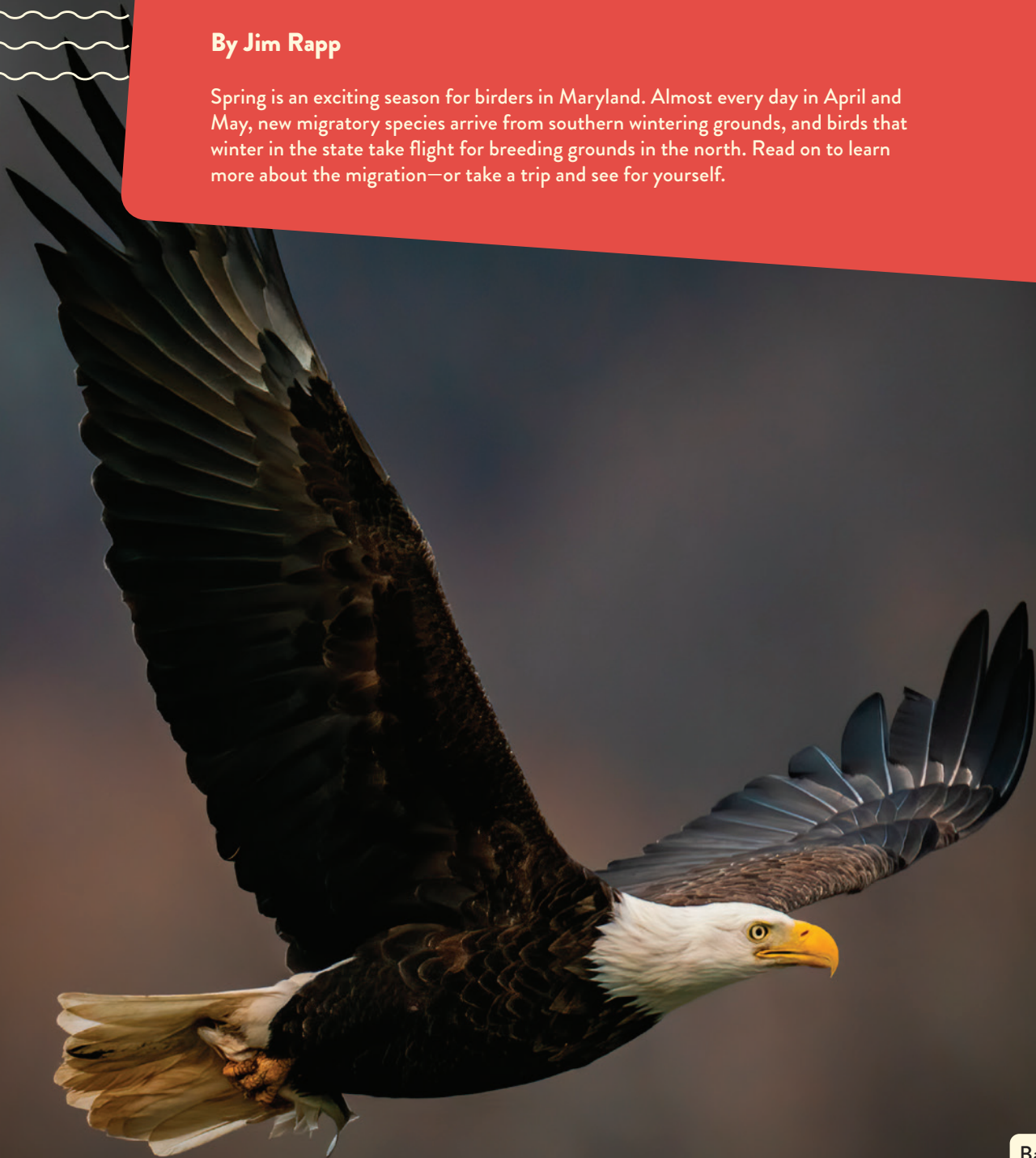
November, Easton
waterfowlfestival.org

Great Egret at
Assateague Island
National Seashore

Spring Migration in Maryland

By Jim Rapp

Spring is an exciting season for birders in Maryland. Almost every day in April and May, new migratory species arrive from southern wintering grounds, and birds that winter in the state take flight for breeding grounds in the north. Read on to learn more about the migration—or take a trip and see for yourself.



Bald Eagle

Waterfowl and loons on the Chesapeake Bay and other coastal bays are replaced by warblers in the woods and shorebirds on the beaches. Each sunrise brings the promise of new spring birdsong filling the air as neotropical migrants begin their ancient courtship rituals.

Neotropical migratory birds actually spend most of their year in the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America and South America. They arrive in Maryland to nest and raise young in the summer. Some nest in the Chesapeake region, while others migrate through the state to breed in the northeastern United States and Canada.

The term “neotropical” refers to migratory birds of the western hemisphere that winter south of the Tropic of Cancer and breed north of that same latitudinal line. There are close to 200 bird species that fit that definition, and most are small songbirds and shorebirds.

You might wonder why a warbler or sandpiper would leave the tropics and southern South America to breed and raise young in the north, when there is so much life south of the border. Besides fleeing winter conditions in the southern hemisphere, the incredible abundance of the food that migratory birds need to raise their babies can be found here and farther north—fare such as caterpillars, small insects, fruit and nectar in our forests, and horseshoe crab eggs and invertebrates on our beaches.

Places to gather food and rest are vital for migratory birds, and Maryland’s forests, marshes and beaches—not to mention its wildlife refuges—are like a giant, never-ending buffet for avian life. Residents of the state also help by creating backyard habitats with native plants; keeping cats and other animals indoors, and limiting the use of pesticides.

Birds also have more daylight in Maryland for feeding in the spring and summer than they do near the equator. When that food disappears and the days begin to shorten in the fall, these same birds fly south with their young to survive the winter months.

Many of these tiny birds migrate tremendous distances to get to Maryland in time for the spring breeding season. A Scarlet Tanager migrating from Colombia or Ecuador might



Scarlet Tanager

travel 3,000 miles to nest in Maryland, while a Red Knot might travel almost 10,000 miles from the southern tip of Argentina to its breeding grounds in the Arctic.

Most small birds migrate at night when temperatures are cooler, the air is calmer, and predators are fewer. They stop to rest and feed during the day. Most fly between 20 to 40 miles per hour. A single non-stop flight between rest stops may last for several hours or several days.

Songbirds flying over the expansive Gulf of Mexico are known to rest on boats or oil rigs before completing their open-water flights to the U.S. When they make landfall, they are exhausted and hungry. If they hit rough weather, a phenomenon known as a “fallout” occurs, when hundreds and thousands of birds concentrate in an area to rest and feed before starting the next leg of their journey.



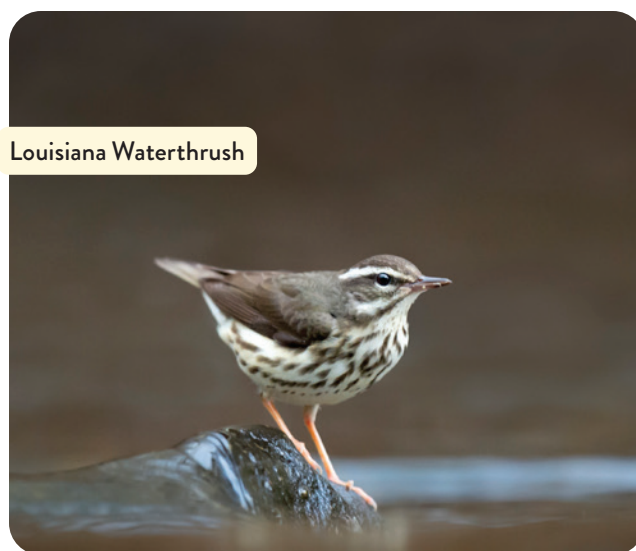
Purple Martins

By early April, many spring migrants, like waterfowl and raptors, have already arrived in Maryland to establish nesting territories. They are soon followed by species that migrate northward through the state, including shorebirds, terns, tanagers and orioles. Here are a few to look and listen for when you're exploring Maryland's parks and preserves.

Purple Martins arrive from South America to nest in man-made martin houses along the shorelines of the Chesapeake Bay and other coastal bays. Purple Martins are our largest swallow, and they are known for their aerial maneuvers when flying to catch insects on the wing—and for keeping the state's mosquito population under control. Males are a dark, glossy purple and females are mostly brown.

Native Americans hung hollow gourds to serve as Purple Martin nest houses well before Europeans arrived in the Americas. Purple Martins in the eastern United States now nest almost exclusively in birdhouses, while those in the west use tree cavities.

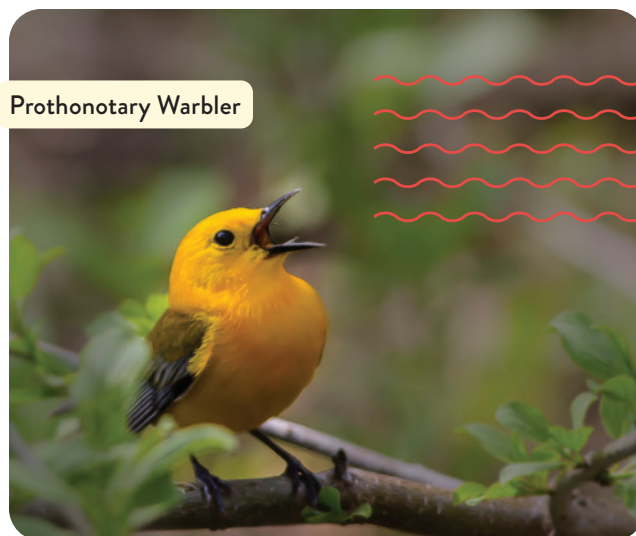
The Louisiana Waterthrush prefers Maryland's bald cypress swamps and slow-moving streams. This large warbler looks more like a thrush or sparrow, with its drab brown back, white belly with dark stripes, and white stripe over the eye. It can be found walking between tree roots and cypress knees at the water's edge, constantly bobbing its tail up and down.



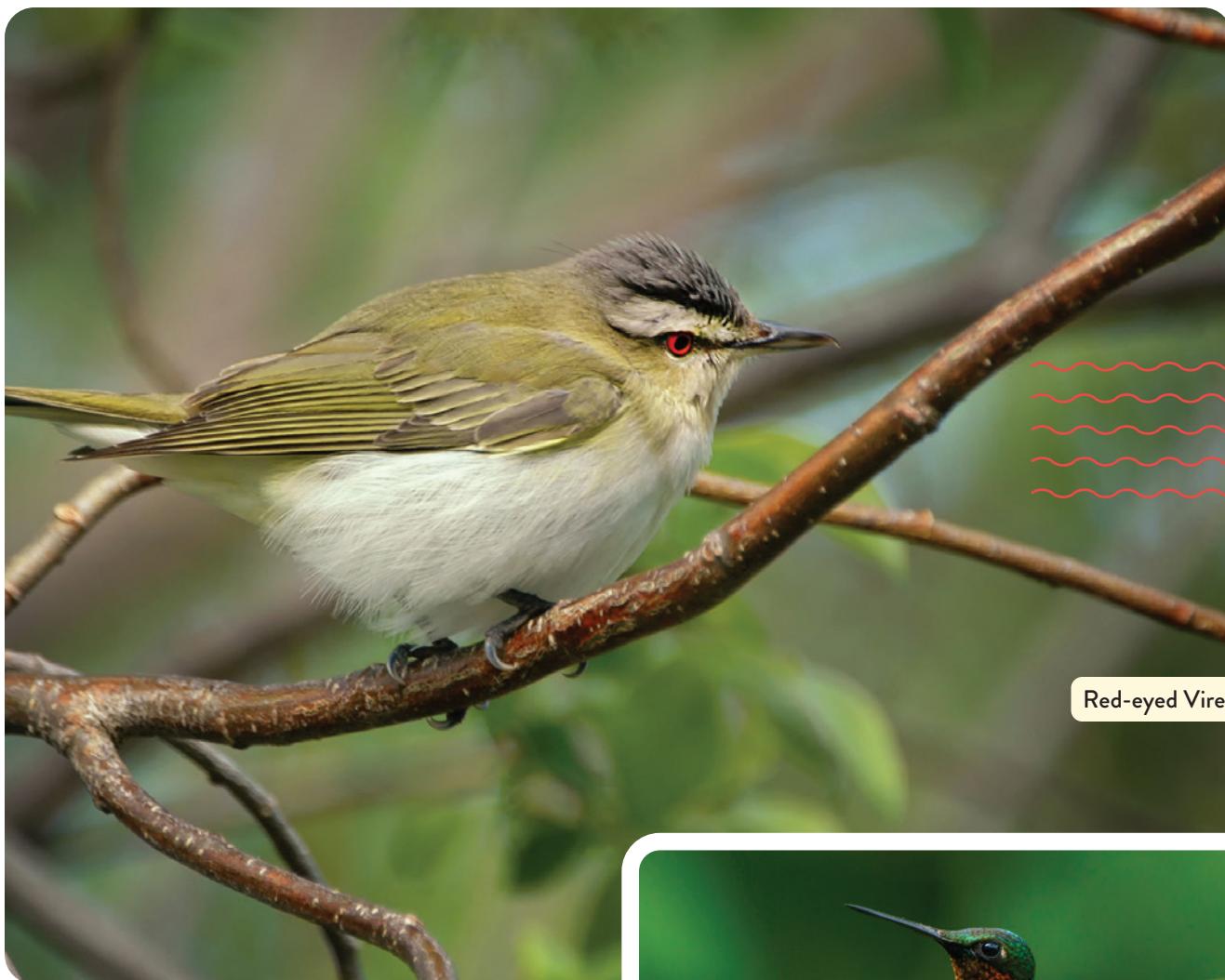
Louisiana Waterthrush

When the Louisiana Waterthrush arrives on its Maryland breeding grounds from wintering in Mexico and Central America, males begin to sing immediately. They will sing almost non-stop all day until they acquire a mate.

Another warbler of Maryland's forests is the brilliant gold-yellow Prothonotary Warbler. It is one of only two neotropical warblers that nest in tree cavities. The name "prothonotary" refers to clerks in the Roman Catholic Church who wore bright yellow robes.



Prothonotary Warbler



Red-eyed Vireo

Known to some as the “preacher bird” for sermonizing all day, the Red-eyed Vireo is one of the most commonly seen—and heard—neotropical migrants in Maryland’s forests. They have olive-green backs, white bellies, a gray cap, and black-and-white streaks near their red eyes. Males will sing constantly from dawn to dusk; their loud calls dominate the forest soundscape, and sound like they’re saying, “See me... here I am!” More than 20,000 individual phrases of the Red-eyed Vireo’s song have been counted in a single day.

Male Scarlet Tanagers are one of the most beautifully colored neotropical migrants in Maryland’s spring and summer forests. Males have electric crimson bodies with ink-black wings and tails, while females are yellowish-green with dark wings. Look for these birds high in the forest canopy from May until late summer, when they take off for northern South America.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are the only breeding hummingbird found in the Eastern United States. They arrive in Maryland after flying from Central America. During migration, many hummingbirds cross the Gulf of Mexico in a single, non-stop flight. You can find these tiny,



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

iridescent green birds glittering in the sun as they feed on the nectar provided by red and orange spring flowers, or at a hummingbird feeder outside of a kitchen window. Feeders must contain the correct ratio of sugar to water; the sugar is important to provide the birds energy for their long flights.

Neotropical migrants fill Maryland’s natural areas with color and song every spring and summer. Come and explore Maryland’s many natural wonders and see the incredible beauty of these winged creatures. ●

Cecil County's Natural Bounty

Elk Neck State Park

Consists of 2,188 acres on a beautiful peninsula at the top of Chesapeake Bay between the North East and Elk Rivers. This year-round travel destination connects vast landscapes and waterways with marshland, woodlands, white clay cliffs, trails, a pond, a seasonal campground, and freshwater swimming. The park's location and diverse habitat provides a flyway for year-round and migrant species. The abundant wild fruit attracts warblers and other songbirds. Hikers, bikers, bird watchers and photographers will find an adventure at Elk Neck State Park. Birdwatchers, keep your eyes peeled for bald eagles, hawks, warblers, falcons, woodpeckers, owls, and waterfowl.

Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area

This tract of 5,656 acres is widely known for beautiful meadows, lush woodlands, historic sites, and natural beauty. The property was owned by William du Pont Jr., who used his scenic estate for cattle, fox hunting, and steeple chase racing. In 1974 the land was purchased by the State of Maryland and became a Natural Resource Management Area. An 80-mile multi-use trail system is suitable for hiking, biking, horseback riding, bird watching, and more. Anglers can cast a line for stocked trout. History buffs can explore to find Mason Dixon markers, a one-room schoolhouse in the woods, and a 19th century covered bridge. Birders have the opportunity to spot bald eagles, great blue herons, belted kingfishers, nesting songbirds, Baltimore and orchard orioles, Kentucky warblers, Louisiana waterthrushes, and nesting songbirds. Extensive grasslands provide habitat for bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows, and eastern meadowlarks.

Susquehanna Region

The towns of Perryville and Port Deposit are part of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway along the eastern

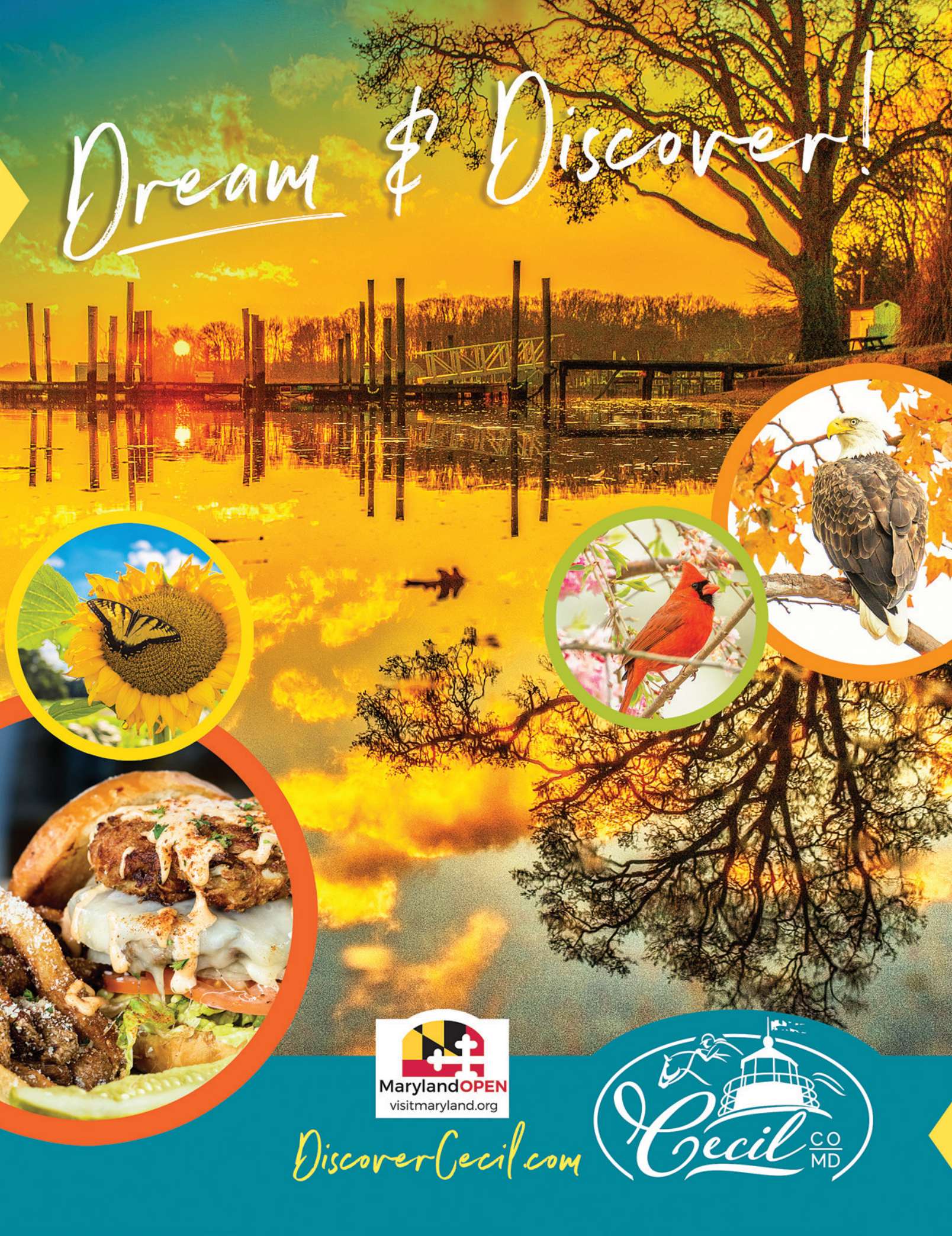


banks of the Susquehanna River, from Conowingo Dam to the Chesapeake Bay. Rich in history, the region is part of the John Smith, Civil War, and Rochambeau national heritage trail systems, and a Maryland Heritage Area. Garrett Island sits off the shores of Perryville and is the only rocky island in the tidal waters of Chesapeake Bay. The Atlantic Flyway attracts swans, osprey, snowy owls, screech owls, canvasbacks, and wood ducks. Coots, buffleheads and gulls congregate in the shallow waters of Furnace Bay and the Susquehanna Flats during chilly months; orioles, belted kingfishers, and eastern kingbirds visit during warmer months; and great blue herons and bald eagles frequent the region year round.

Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and South

Chesapeake City spans both the shorelines of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and offers picturesque historic architecture and visitor attractions. Much of the region south of Chesapeake City, including Bohemia River State Park, is marked by agricultural and beautiful landscape. In addition to the canal, waterways include the Elk, Bohemia and Sassafras Rivers. Visitors can enjoy waterfront vistas, farm fields, greenhouses, horse farms, nurseries, and a vineyard as they drive along Route 213, which is part of the Scenic Byway: Chesapeake Country All American Road. Birds you might spot include upland game, waterfowl, bald eagles, cormorants and herons. •

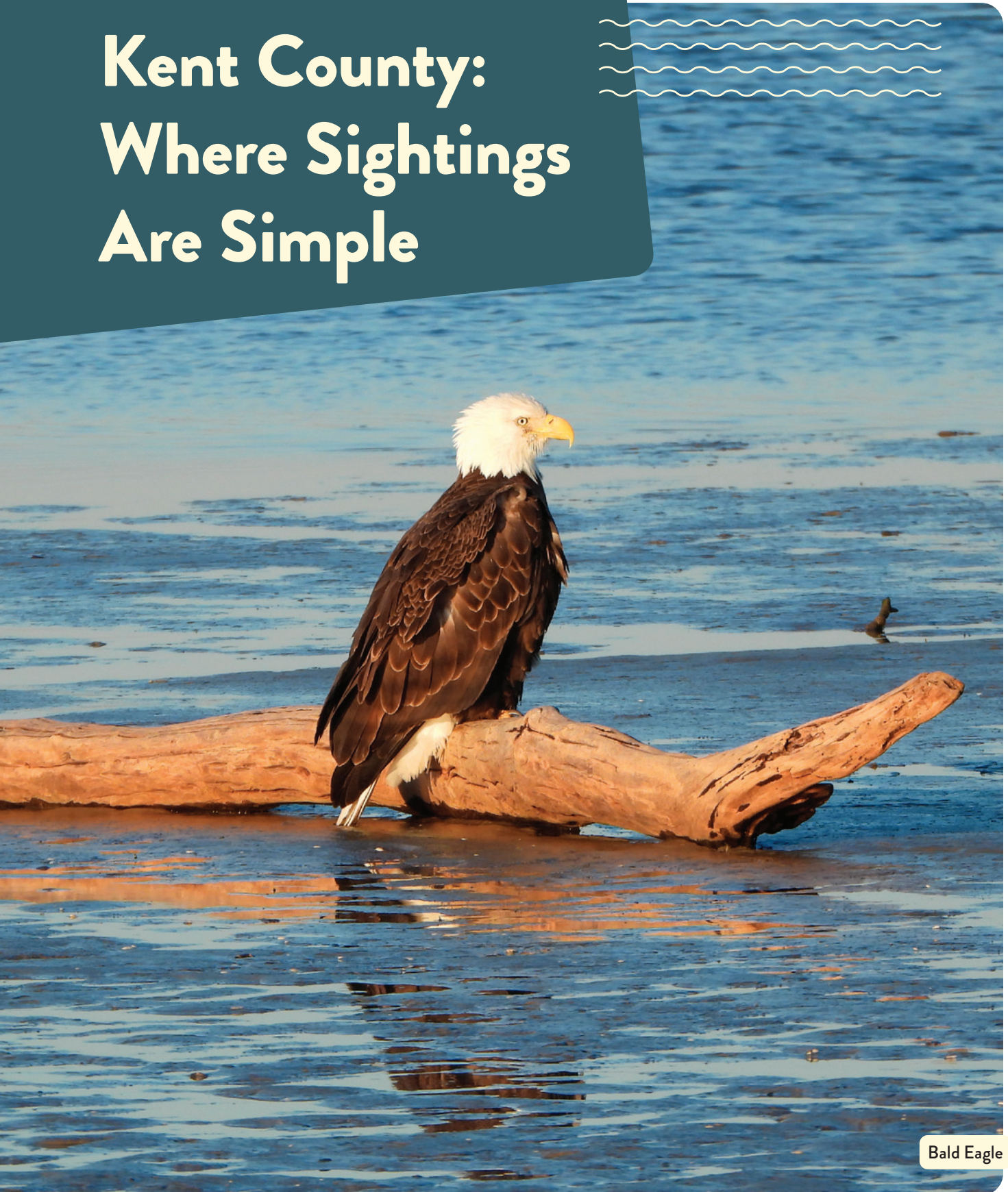
Dream & Discover!



DiscoverCecil.com



Kent County: Where Sightings Are Simple



Bald Eagle

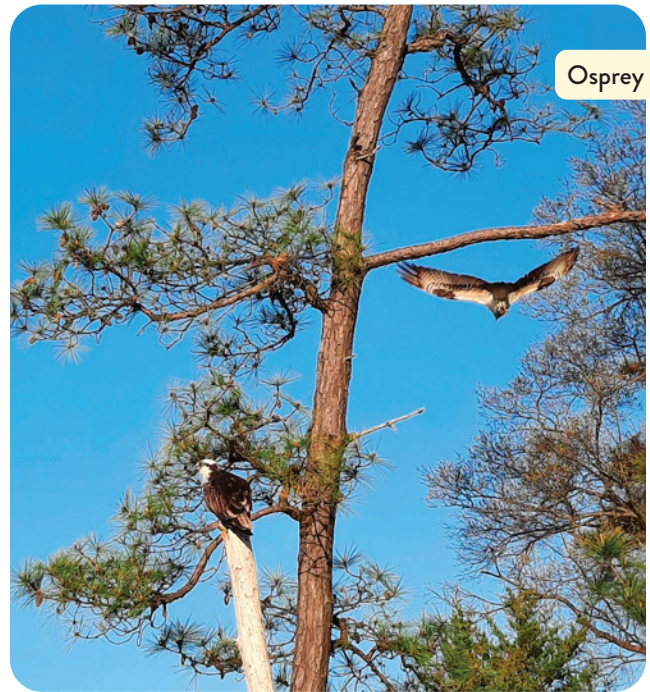
A patchwork of green, yellow and brown covers a landscape surrounded by large swaths of silvery-blue glinting like a mirror for the sun; ribbons of jade and teal weave through clusters of lush green groves; and quaint towns where life is easy and offer fountains and flower gardens by which to rest. This is Kent County, Maryland, with a landscape this inviting, it's no wonder the area is a haven for birds, waterfowl and butterflies.

From wood to wetland and agricultural to pelagic, Kent County's variety of ecosystems offers both migratory and resident birds prime habitats for respite or long-term stays, and the year-round accommodations mean it's a major destination for birding enthusiasts, too.

As of spring 2019, the Maryland Ornithological Society listed 310 species of birds in Kent County alone so whether it's the migratory season or the months in between, there's lots of quacking, honking and singing going on.

You don't have to be a serious birder to enjoy the activity of birdwatching. Make it easy to get started by visiting Kent

County where the sightings are simple, and there's so much more to see and do. Plan your stay today. •



Osprey



PLAN YOUR ADVENTURE

KENTCOUNTY.COM/VISITORS



MarylandOPEN

An Intro to Birding In Dorchester County



A Great Egret at
Blackwater National
Wildlife Refuge

Perhaps the prime reason that birders and nature enthusiasts flock to Dorchester County on Maryland's Eastern Shore is to marvel at the splendor of the vast marshlands and the wildlife that live here. Dorchester County, Maryland, is the home of world-renowned Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, one of the largest Bald Eagle populations on the East Coast and tidal marshes so vast they have been called "the Everglades of Maryland." Blackwater is one of the chief wintering areas for migrating ducks and Canada geese using the Atlantic Flyway, a kind of superhighway for migrating birds. The refuge also hosts free, guided birding tours in the spring and the fall.

Thanks to the diversity of habitats found within Dorchester County, more than 300 bird species have been recorded here. Some are here seasonally (i.e. they migrate south for the winter or north for the summer); other birds are year-round residents. All birds have their favorite habitats and knowing which habitat each prefers is the first step in finding them.

In our Dorchester County Birding Guide, we have outlined five habitats that are found here, along with the types of birds that can be seen in each habitat. We've also put together five suggested birding trails throughout the county. Find these guides at visitdorchester.org.



Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Soar with the Eagles in Dorchester County



OPEN FOR
WILDLIFE DISCOVERIES

Go to VisitDorchester.org



Explore Maryland's Coast in Worcester County

Delmarva Birding Weekend



For those interested in viewing birds, there are no off-seasons on Maryland's Coast. In the earliest months of the year, you can see ducks and geese. Great flocks of gulls will congregate, and uncommon species may be seen. In the spring the songbird and shorebird migration are at its peak. Barrier island beaches will get their annual visits from terns, skimmers, brown pelicans, and piping plovers. In the fall, the peak movement of neotropical songbirds begins as they leave their nesting areas to head south. Common sightings include vireos, yellow-rumped warblers and common yellowthroats.

Birding in Worcester County also is a chance to experience the unspoiled wilderness which attracts, sustains, and protects so much natural life. Within a radius of just a few miles exist the unique-yet accessible worlds of a barrier island, a cypress swamp, forests, tidal wetlands, and secluded fields. Stop anywhere along the road and you'll be able to observe an abundance of birds which inhabit the immediate vicinity. Some prime birding locations to check out on Maryland's Coast include Nassawango Creek, Pocomoke River at Porter's and Whiton crossing, Heron Park, Ocean City Inlet, West Ocean City Pond, Sunset Park, South Point, and Assateague Island National Seashore and State Park.

The towns and communities throughout Worcester County also invite you to explore, dine and shop throughout. There is trendy Berlin, historic Snow Hill, beautiful Pocomoke City, green Ocean Pines and exciting Ocean City. For a free visitor guide and checklist to birding in Worcester County, contact the tourism and economic development office at 410-632-3110. •



Delmarva Birding Weekend

Bird watch in... MARYLAND'S *Coast* WORCESTER COUNTY

www.VisitMarylandsCoast.org



Ocean City • Assateague Island National Seashore
Berlin • Snow Hill • Pocomoke

Howard County: A Small Hub



Birdwatchers searching for Abine's Gull at the Triadelphia Reservoir

Conveniently located just outside Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Howard County, despite its small size, is a hub for varied and ever-changing birdlife at many accessible sites. There are 307 species on the county's Field Checklist, of which 220 or more are seen annually. This provides great opportunities to see and hear many birds, whatever the season.

Nature's calendar begins in late winter as waterfowl begin moving northward. Skeins of Canada Geese honking high overhead or flocks of large, white Tundra Swans against a bright blue sky are definite signs of spring.

By late March, pairs of Eastern Bluebirds begin to claim nest sites. Their flash of blue and quiet warble is a soothing treat. Because many people monitored hundreds of nest boxes over the last 40 years, this attractive species is now easily seen in many parts of the county.

Spring also brings a colorful assortment of warblers and other neotropical migrants, all in their most attractive plumage. A May morning after a warm night might produce dozens of birds in any location—a highlight of a birder's year. One of the most elusive species to be found are rails like Sora, Virginia, Black and Clapper; however, Meadowbrook Park is a place where these birds have been seen and heard in migration.

More than 90 bird species breed locally, including the American Goldfinch, Howard County's official bird, and the Baltimore Oriole, the Maryland State Bird. The American Goldfinch can be seen almost anywhere in the county, but their suitable habitats can be found in Centennial Park, Schooley Mill Park, and Rockburn Branch Park, as well as

the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area. When searching for nesting birds, don't overlook cell towers, as they are becoming surprisingly popular with Ospreys, Bald Eagles, and Common Ravens, which used to be extremely rare to see.

By August, some birds have started to trickle south. Autumn hawk migration is one of nature's major spectacles. Although local raptor numbers do not usually rival those at the best-known sites, hundreds of Broad-winged Hawks may pass through during a few days in late September. Some lucky observers have been known to tally several thousand birds for an unforgettable day.

As the year winds down, some birds depart; others arrive for the winter. By late December, Common Mergansers show up at Triadelphia Reservoir. A visit to Brighton Dam may find several thousand birds on the water—multiple wintering Bald Eagles are a bonus at this site.

Some county locations can produce a variety of species year-round. Among the best are Centennial Park, the three Columbia lakes, the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (east of Trotter Road), and the Howard County Conservancy property at Mount Pleasant (MD 99 near Woodstock Road). The Skywatch at the last location merits a visit during hawk migration.

The Howard County Bird Club's website (howardbirds.org) is an unparalleled resource for detailed county bird information. Photographs, checklists, site guides, and much more are available to anyone interested in exploring the rich and rewarding birdlife of Howard County. •

Information and photos provided by Howard Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society.



Oriole



Blue Heron



Bluebird

307 SPECIES AND COUNTING...



307 documented species

220 annual species

90 breeding species

Historic Ellicott City



American Goldfinch

HOWARD COUNTY

The green in between

Lovely lakes and award-winning parks all connected by over 100 miles of paved scenic trails.

Minutes from the Washington DC and Baltimore beltways with comfortable amenities, delicious dining, arts & culture, and more!

Wildlife Images by Bonnie Ott

Plan your trip today!

www.VisitHowardCounty.com

@visithocomd



Calvert County: Loved By All

Solomons Island



Calvert County is open and ready to welcome you! Miles of wooded trails, exquisite beachfront, museums, boutique shopping and a delicious food, brewery and winery scene await. Though it's only an hour south of Washington D.C., Calvert County will feel like a world away. Hop in the car or dock your boat at one of several public piers to take advantage of our beautiful beaches, restaurants and special events!

Ready for the island life? Coastal Living magazine voted Solomons Island as “One of the 15 Happiest Seaside Towns in America,” making it a must-see on your visit to the area. Nestled where the Patuxent River meets the Chesapeake Bay, this charming spot offers shopping, restaurants and a boardwalk perfect for a waterfront stroll at sunset. This picturesque spot is also home to the family-friendly Calvert Marine Museum. With its incredible marine life programs, nautical exhibits and host of year-round events, the museum offers something for every age.

Looking to channel your inner artist? Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center offers rotating art exhibits, festivals, classes and family activities throughout the year. Wander through the wooded walking paths and enjoy

sculptures on loan from the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery of Art. Or, enjoy one of the studio art classes and create your very own masterpiece to take home!

Feeling adventurous? Charter a fishing boat and make the catch of the day! Or, make your own waves and hop on a jet ski, take a sailing lesson, visit the Chesapeake Beach Water Park, paddle a kayak or rent a power boat at one of the local marinas. Ready to slow it down? Spend the afternoon on one of Calvert's incredible beaches and enjoy miles of gentle surf and sand. Stop at Calvert Cliffs State Park and hunt for fossils and shark's teeth at the water's edge. You might find an incredible, 23-million-year-old memento!

Want to stay on land? With miles of trails to explore throughout the county, you may spot a bald eagle in its natural habitat – or simply take in the rolling hills and peaceful woodlands. Hiking enthusiasts will want to visit the American Chestnut Land Trust to enjoy 22 miles of serene public hiking trails. Guided canoe trips and hikes through pristine wetlands provide the perfect opportunity to reconnect with nature.

It's not hard to see why Calvert County is loved by both visitors and locals alike! ●

Explore the Calvert County BIRDING TRAIL



Always in Season

With serene hiking trails, beautiful beaches and majestic cliffs, Calvert County offers diverse habitats to hundreds of bird species.

Go to www.VisitCalvert.com/MDBG
for an interactive map of the Calvert County Birding Trail.



Calvert County
MARYLAND

The Birds of Charles County



Barred Owl

Charles County is a captivating escape just outside of the nation's capital, with picturesque meandering roadsides that are worth the trip in itself. There is a vast array of attractions, including a robust birding environment. Spot one of the multitudes of bird species, including the Red-Tailed Hawk, American Bittern and Barred Owl, among numerous others.



Red-Eyed Vireo



Red-Tailed Hawk

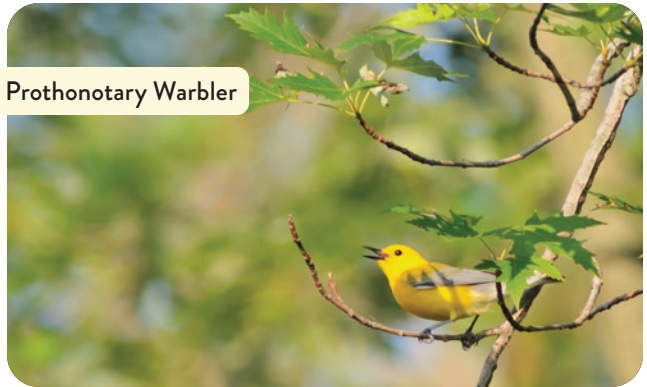


Acadian Flycatcher

Purple Martin



Prothonotary Warbler



GET OUTDOORS

DISCOVER BIRDING IN CHARLES COUNTY, MD

BIRD ENTHUSIASTS! Charles County is home to more than 140 species of birds, big and small. Enjoy 30+ parks to help sight one of our beautiful feathered friends. Start by watching our Eagle Cam at:

ExploreCharlesCounty.com

Charles County
MARYLAND
Legends, Lore and Room to Explore

Maryland
CHARLES COUNTY

Red-Tailed Hawk

American Bittern

Barred Owl

Washington County: A Favorite for Birders

Washington Monument State Park



Bird-watching has long been a favorite activity in Washington County. Professional ornithologists, photographers, birdwatching enthusiasts and nature lovers come from across the USA to soak up the scenery, snap the common and elusive bird pics, do scientific research, and simply enjoy.

According to Maryland's Department of Natural Resources' website, there are more than 445 species of birds in the state, with about 222 species regularly nesting here. A complete list can be found here: [Maryland Birds](#). The county's location with the Potomac River as its southern border lends itself to some of the best bird-watching in the mid-Atlantic.

The spine of South Mountain is known as the "Atlantic Flyway," and is the pathway for neotropical migrating birds travelling to and from warmer climates, such as hawks, eagles and owls. Washington Monument State Park has an official Hawk Watch station, recognized by the Hawk Migration Association of North America. washingtonmonumenthawkwatch.webs.com

Depending on migration patterns, birds commonly seen in the springtime are Grasshopper Sparrows, Eastern

Meadowlarks, Indigo Buntings, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and various flycatchers, vireos and warblers. Raptors and Red-tailed Hawks are also commonly seen, as are American Bald Eagles.

Other common raptor sightings include the Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, American Kestrel, and Broad-winged Hawks. Great Blue Herons are frequently spotted along the Potomac River and the C&O Canal. White-crowned Sparrows are among the wintering species. At night, Barred Owls, Screech Owls, and Great Horned Owls can be heard and seen.

Bird trails and opportunities to view birdlife are abundant in Washington County. See below and click the links for some of our favorite places to watch and wait for a feathered sighting. •

[Antietam Bird Trail](#)

[C&O Canal Bird Trail](#)

[Bird Watching South Mountain Recreation Area](#)

[Indian Springs Wildlife Management Area](#)

[Sideling Hill Wildlife Management Area](#)

Birding Resources:

[Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#)

[The Potomac Valley Audubon Society](#)

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The Sounds of Nature



Nassawango Creek Preserve

Spending time in nature has a restorative effect on our psyche. If you close your eyes, you can imagine the clear-headed calmness that you feel during a walk through the woods. The sounds of rustling leaves, a babbling stream, bird songs, and the chorus of insects will melt the stress away. There is a growing body of science dedicated to the study of nature soundscapes and how we interpret the sounds of nature, including a new study by the Maryland/DC chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

For the past several years, Gabe Cahalan, TNC conservation steward, has been conducting an acoustic monitoring study on two TNC preserves in Maryland. Cahalan is comparing biodiversity in forests that we have kept open with controlled burns, to dense forests where fire has been suppressed, by measuring the “bio-acoustic index” of each forest type.

“In open forests, where we have been burning, we’re hearing a higher diversity of birds and other species than in the overgrown forests,” says Cahalan. “I think this study confirms that our fire management is working. It’s helping preserve some of the rare species that we aim to protect on our lands.”

The science is clear that healthy, well-managed forests are good for people and nature. The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has resulted in new and different levels of stress for all of humanity. It has emphasized the need to protect and conserve nature at a faster rate than ever before. Nature is talking to us, and we must listen.

To hear some of the bird sounds that TNC captured in the acoustic study, visit Nassawango Creek Preserve on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where you’ll get the chance to listen to whip-poor-wills, woodpeckers, and warblers. •

Scarlet Tanager



“What I am interested in with birds...is what they do and why they do it.”

- Sir David Attenborough



Visit
Nature.org/Nassawango
to plan your next birding adventure

Baltimore oriole © Laurie Painter/2019 TNC Photo Contest;
prothonotary warbler © Steve S. Meyer; scarlet tanager © Kent Mason

The Nature
Conservancy 
Maryland/DC



Fall Migration in Maryland is Like No Other

By Dave Wilson

Fall migration in Maryland is a spectacle matched by few places in the United States.

Canada Geese

Overnight, relatively quiet parks and natural areas are transformed into bustling, open aviaries, with songbirds dancing on every tree branch and shorebirds concentrating in tight, organized flocks on mud flats and beaches along the coastal bays and the Chesapeake Bay. Species not seen since the spring make their annual autumn appearance as they push south to warmer wintering grounds, some traveling as far as Tierra del Fuego at the very southern tip of the South American continent.

There are several reasons for the Free State's high position on the birding destination wish list. The first is geography: birds often follow coastlines during migration. The Chesapeake Bay and barrier island system are right in the middle of the Atlantic Flyway, a major route for many of the Western Hemisphere's most sought-after species.

Birds also seem to prefer funnel-shaped peninsulas with a north-south orientation. Each autumn, migratory birds descend on Maryland's eastern flank before bottlenecking

Assateague Island

on Delmarva's southern tip, where they rest and forage before taking flight over the expansive mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The numbers of individuals and species headed south are dazzling. Spend a weekend birding on the state's Lower Shore, and you might top 150 species on your bird tally.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge





Black-throated Blue Warbler



Black-and-white Warbler

All over Maryland, songbirds, ospreys, pelicans, herons and egrets are checking out for warmer climes as ducks, shorebirds, and raptors head south to fill the void. All will take advantage of the state's national wildlife refuges, state and local parks, and wildlife management areas.

Winds and weather also deliver birds to almost any Maryland location. During fall migration, rapidly changing weather can produce migratory bird "fallouts," when thousands of birds leave the skies to congregate in a small area while waiting for better weather. Some fallouts can be small, such as a narrow, shrubby point jutting out into a bay, while others can cover city parks and backyards.

If strong winds blow from the south, many migrants will wait for days until favorable tail winds appear to help carry them over the Chesapeake Bay. Heavy storms and fog can cause birds to fly a little too far over the Atlantic, and these cautious migrants will quickly snap back toward the coast, where they can wait safely for the bad weather to pass.

Such a spectacle occurred at our home near Berlin, Maryland a few years ago in late September. A heavy rain storm followed by multiple days of strong southerly winds dropped thousands of songbirds on our nine-acre property. As dry conditions succeeded, hundreds

Blue Grosbeak



Some species migrate thousands of miles, non-stop, from departure to arrival. Scientists are learning more about these epic migrations with the help of technology. Using tiny satellite transmitters, scientists with the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary and The Nature Conservancy tracked a tall shorebird known as a Whimbrel that flew 3,200 miles, non-stop, in just under seven days. To accomplish this incredible migration, the Whimbrel sustained an average flight speed of 22 miles per hour for the duration of its journey.

Birds and the wild areas that support them add to the quality of life we enjoy here in Maryland, but birding is also big business. We hope you'll come to Maryland this fall to experience the best of bird migration on the East Coast. •

of individuals representing dozens of species would congregate around our sprinkler for a bath and a cool drink. Species included a variety of warblers—Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, and Black-throated Blue, in addition to American Redstarts. At one point a Summer Tanager and Blue Grosbeak preened next to each other on the same branch.

Fall migration actually starts in early summer for some shorebirds, but August, September and October are peak months for most songbirds and raptors. November and December are when the waterfowl and seabirds arrive to take advantage of the state's copious winter habitats for our iconic ducks, geese, and swans.

Typically, big, soaring birds, such as raptors and egrets, migrate during the day when they can make use of thermals and air currents that provide lift under their large wings to assist them on their journey south. Smaller songbirds, such as warblers and sparrows, tend to migrate at night. After a long night flight, they will spend the morning foraging on fruits, seeds and insects to get their energy up for the next leg of their trip. While they're feeding, you can get a good look at these birds, who seem much more concerned about breakfast than any threat posed by a quiet, patient birder.

Osprey



— GUIDE TO —

BIRDING

IN MARYLAND



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