

Field Notes

A Lower Shore Land Trust Resource
for Land Managers, Farmers, Hunters, and Naturalists

Fall 2024



Special Bird Edition

made possible by a generous grant from



Photo by Jim Rapp

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Birding for Business



Photo by Jim Rapp

The Lower Shore Land Trust took flight on a new community project this year. Partnering with Delmarva Birding Weekends, The Trust set out to highlight the economic impact of birdwatching on our regional economy. The Lower Shore of Maryland is a well-known national and international birdwatching destination, and this notoriety is an often-unheralded economic driver for tourism to the region.

Through a grant from the Rural Maryland Council, The Lower Shore Land Trust and Delmarva Birding Weekends hosted a series of bird walks organized and led by Delmarva Birding Weekends founder, Jim Rapp and the Trust's very own Jared Parks, Director of the Trust's Land Programs and birder extraordinaire. The walks aimed to introduce new or out-of-the-way birding sites to the local public. The Trust and Delmarva Birding Weekends are also working in collaboration to install birding signage as well as produce a brochure highlighting great birding spots across the Lower Shore.

If you missed the walks, fear not! That's in part what this special edition of Field Notes is for. We want everyone on the Lower Shore to connect with the natural wonders that transpire across our Lower Shore skies, forests, marshes, and land daily. These natural wonders and the critical role our region plays in the migration of birds are also a reminder of the critical work the Lower Shore Land Trust plays in ensuring our local habitat is conserved for future generations of birds and birders alike.

Delmarva Birding Weekends

Experience the best of year-round birding on the Delmarva Peninsula

Where Do I Look and Why?

JARED PARKS

Birds, like many animal groups, can be divided into two broad categories: generalists and specialists. To locate a particular species, it's helpful to determine which category your target belongs to. For example, American goldfinches are generalists and can be found in a wide range of habitats, from forests to fields and backyards. In contrast, purple sandpipers are specialists, typically found only along the coastline.

Specialist birds tend to be less common overall but can be abundant in their specific habitats, while generalists are more widespread. On Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore, several unique habitats host specialist birds. Agriculture is a dominant land use here, with fields and scrubby areas supporting species like indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, orchard orioles, prairie warblers, and northern bobwhite quail, all dependent on the declining shrub/scrub habitat.

Forests cover much of the remaining land, with a mix of plantation loblolly pine stands and native hardwood forests. Though plantation forests are less diverse, the natural forests of the mid-Atlantic are rich in species, hosting Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) such as scarlet and summer tanagers, red-eyed and yellow-throated vireos, and wood thrushes. Notably, the prothonotary warbler is a specialist that nests in tree cavities over water.



Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*)

Photo by: ps50ace from Getty Images

Wetlands, both freshwater and tidal marshes, are a significant part of Delmarva's landscape and rural heritage. These tidal salt marshes are among the world's most productive ecosystems and are home to specialists like marsh wrens, black rails, and seaside and saltmarsh sparrows, which can only be found in Maryland's coastal marshes.



Prothonotary Warbler
(*Protonotaria citrea*)

Photo by: Raymond Hennessy

USER FRIENDLY BIRDING RESOURCES



American Birding Association
ABA.org



AllAboutBirds.org



Audubon.org



Maryland Ornithological Society
MDbirds.org



Merlin Bird ID



iNaturalist.org



eBird.org

MOVING ON UP

BROOKE ORR

As climate change progresses, habitats are shifting northward due to rising temperatures and changing weather patterns. Vegetation and ecosystems that were once prevalent in the southern regions are gradually transitioning to the north. This shift forces species to relocate, as they rely on specific habitats for survival. When the necessary vegetation, shelter, and food sources begin to diminish in one area and thrive in another, the species dependent on them must follow. In Maryland, two notable examples of this phenomenon are the Baltimore oriole and the Mississippi kite.

The Baltimore oriole, Maryland's state bird, is known for its bright orange underbelly and black head. It inhabits deciduous hardwood forests, where it finds the insects, berries, and nectar it needs for food, and builds nests from materials derived from trees like elms and maples.

However, as temperatures rise, the deciduous trees and associated plants are migrating north, causing the oriole to follow its shifting habitat. If this trend continues, the Baltimore oriole may no longer nest in Maryland in the future, as its natural habitat moves beyond the state.



Photo by: Daniel Jara

Baltimore Oriole
(*Icterus galbula*)

In contrast to the oriole, the Mississippi kite is expanding its range into Maryland. This raptor, with its smoky gray back, light gray head, and black wingtips, prefers sparsely wooded areas near open lands. Traditionally found in the southern plains and southeastern U.S., the Mississippi kite is now breeding further north due to warmer temperatures and changes in forested areas. Nesting pairs of Mississippi kites have been observed in Maryland, and birders can spot them from late spring through early fall.

The Lower Shore Land Trust works to protect habitats that support wildlife, whether species are moving in, moving out, or staying put in Maryland. By preserving critical areas, the Lower Shore Land Trust helps ensure that species like the Baltimore oriole and Mississippi kite can adapt to the changing environment and continue to thrive.

Mississippi Kite
(*Ictinia mississippiensis*)



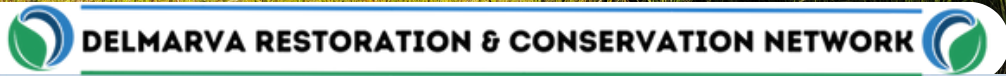
Photo by: Bethany Kays

Birding Ethics:

1. Respect and promote birds and their environment.
2. Respect and promote the birding community and its individual members.
3. Respect and promote the law and the rights of others.

<https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>

MARSHES FOR TOMORROW



Salt marshes are ecologically and culturally significant landscapes on the lower eastern shore of Maryland. Their long-term survival is under threat due to impacts of climate change and local geological processes. Marshes for Tomorrow is a landscape-scale restoration plan for Maryland's salt marshes being spearheaded by Audubon Mid-Atlantic and executed through the Delmarva Restoration and Conservation Network (DRCN). The initiative will create a restoration plan for 25,000 acres of Maryland's saltmarshes to support and maintain a stable population of Saltmarsh Sparrows.

Currently, Maryland supports 25% of this small, marsh-obligate bird which nests exclusively along the Atlantic Coast in the higher elevation marsh. Saltmarsh Sparrows have been declining at an alarming rate since the 1990s, Predictions indicate the population could collapse within 50 years.

In collaboration with local partners, such as the Lower Shore Land Trust, Marshes for Tomorrow combines statistical computer modeling, community input, and policy advocacy to offer a long-term restoration plan for Maryland's salt marshes. Ultimately, salt marsh restoration at this scale has the power to save an entire ecosystem—as well as the imperiled Saltmarsh Sparrow— and along with it, provide economic benefits to fisheries, tourism, and local communities. This project is made possible through funding from the USFWS and a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Saltmarsh Sparrow
(*Ammodramus caudacutus*)
photo by Frank Lehman



HENRIETTA BELLMAN
Audubon Mid-Atlantic

ECONOMICS OF BIRDING

The Economy and the Environment



Photo by Jim Rapp

The Eastern Shore of Maryland, nestled between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, is a haven for bird enthusiasts. Its unique geographical location and diverse habitats make it a prime destination for birdwatching enthusiasts.

The Eastern Shore boasts a stunning array of ecosystems, each offering its own unique birdlife. From the vast marshes of the Chesapeake Bay, teeming with waterfowl and shorebirds, to the serene forests and cypress swamps that attract songbirds and raptors, there is something to captivate every birder. The region's diverse habitats are a result of its proximity to both the bay and the ocean, as well as its coastal topography.

The region is situated along the Atlantic Flyway, a major migratory route for hundreds of bird species. Each spring and fall, millions of birds pass through the region, making it a prime time for birding. Summer is the season for nesting birds, while winter provides a season for waterfowl to rest before migrating to northern breeding grounds.

To safeguard the Eastern Shore's rich biodiversity, numerous protected areas and conservation initiatives have been established. National parks and wildlife refuges, state wildlife management areas, and private conservation lands provide safe havens for birds and other wildlife. These areas offer visitors opportunities for undisturbed birding experiences, as well as educational programs and guided tours.

Beyond the thrill of spotting rare and unusual birds, birding offers numerous benefits for both physical and mental health. Spending time outdoors in nature has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance cognitive function. The act of observing and identifying birds requires focus and concentration, providing a mental workout.

Additionally, birding often involves walking and exploring various habitats, offering opportunities for physical activity. Birding tourism plays a vital role in the local economy of the Eastern Shore. By attracting visitors from around the world, birding helps to support local businesses, accommodations, and guided tour operators. It also contributes to the preservation of the region's natural beauty and encourages environmental stewardship.



Brown Pelican Young (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Photo by Lynn Kohler

Delmarva Birding Weekends

Experience the best of year-round birding on the Delmarva Peninsula

JIM RAPP



Since 1995, Delmarva Birding Weekends has offered birders the chance to explore the Eastern Shore's diverse habitats and participate in guided tours and special events. Delmarva Birding started as an annual spring event designed to showcase the Eastern Shore to birders. Today, tours and events are offered year-round to highlight the diversity of birdlife here in every season. These travel experiences have helped to solidify the region's reputation as a premier birding destination. Delmarva Birding supports tourism in our rural communities through hotel stays, restaurant meals, and boat charters.

As bird populations face increasing threats due to habitat loss, climate change, and other factors, it is essential to protect and conserve the Eastern Shore's natural habitats. By supporting local conservation efforts and practicing responsible birding practices, we can help to ensure that this region remains a birder's paradise for generations to come.



EXPLORE THE LOWER SHORE: ACCESSIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING FOR EVERYONE

JARED PARKS

The Lower Shore of Maryland is brimming with fantastic spots for outdoor lovers to immerse themselves in nature and wildlife! Whether you're along the peaceful Nanticoke River in Sharptown, enjoying the sun and sand at the Atlantic beaches near Ocean City, or exploring the beautiful marshes surrounding Deal Island, there's a perfect place for kayaking, hiking, birdwatching, creating art, or simply having a fun family picnic.

While not every location is fully accessible to all, it's important to remember that "accessibility" goes beyond being wheelchair-friendly. Some visitors may face challenges like mobility concerns, hearing or vision impairments, language barriers, or limited transportation options. But don't worry—many sites on the Lower Shore are working hard to accommodate a wider range of abilities. Below are just a few accessible spots where you can easily enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife Maryland has to offer!



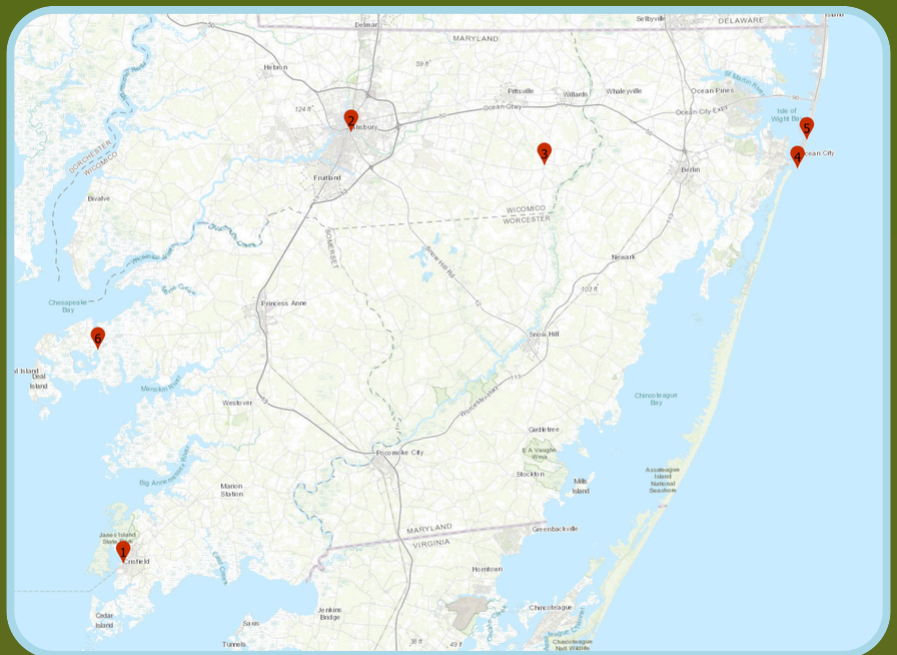
"Birding doesn't discriminate. Having a disabled father, birding was a way that we could have a shared experience in nature. We'd sit in a beautiful location and let the birds come to us."
- Kim Abplanalp



Susan Latour and Kim Abplanalp
Nutters Neck Bird Walk

ACCESSIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING SPOTS ON THE LOWER SHORE:

- Crisfield Municipal Park
- Salisbury City Park and Schumaker Pond
- Adkins Mill Pond
- Ocean City Inlet
- Sunset Park
- Deal Island Wildlife Management Area



Birding should be fun and help build a better future for birds, for birders, and for all people
Birds and birding opportunities are shared resources that should be open and accessible to all
Birders should always give back more than they take: <https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>

Birding Spots for Everyone on the Lower Shore



Crisfield Municipal Park

Location: Downtown Crisfield, MD

Amenities: 0.2 mile trail and a wooden pier that extends over the marsh out into the water, parking area, covered gazebo, and all handicap accessible.

Birds: ducks, geese, osprey, herons, egrets, and songbirds

Salisbury City Park and Schumaker Pond

Location: Salisbury, MD

Amenities: City Zoo, well-maintained trails and handicap accessible picnic areas.

Birds: some exotic birds at the zoo, waterfowl in the river, herons, osprey, and various songbirds including warblers, vireos, and sparrows



Adkins Mill Pond

Location: Powellville, MD

Amenities: 33.7-acre park has a 0.5 mile nature trail, a pavilion, handicap accessible raised boardwalk, and fishing access.

Birds: herons, wood ducks, and swamp specialties like Prothonotary and Yellow-Throated warblers

Birding Spots for Everyone on the Lower Shore

Ocean City Inlet & Sunset Park

Location: Ocean City, MD

Amenities: Paved viewing from the Ocean City Inlet Parking Lot. Possible to bird from vehicle.

Birds: loons, seabirds, ducks, shorebirds, gulls, and terns



Sunset Park

Location: Ocean City, MD

Amenities: Paved, accessible paths to one of the best birding spots on the Shore. Prime birding at sunrise.

Birds: loons, seabirds, ducks, shorebirds, gulls, and terns and migrating songbirds

Deal Island Wildlife Management Area

Location: Dames Quarter, MD

Amenities: Trail around the 2,800 acre marsh impoundment and primitive camping area. Possible to bird from vehicle.

Birds: puddle and diving ducks, geese, herons, egrets, ibis, shorebirds, and tidal marsh songbirds



Field Notes

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UPCOMING FALL EVENTS

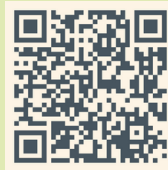


» **Monday, October 28th, 6-8pm**
Pouring for Preservation @
Burley Oak Brewing Co.

Come hang out with us at Burley Oak in Berlin for a night of brews and celebrity guest bartenders Kate Patton and Secretary Jake Day! To benefit the Land Trust.



» **Saturday, November 9th, 3-6pm**
Flannel Formal @ Coulbourn Farm
Get Your Tickets Now! » » »



Our Biggest Party of the Year! Live Music, BBQ, oyster bar, Bloody Mary bar, fine wine, craft beers, yard games, a bonfire, silent auction, and more!



» **Friday December 6th, 5-8pm**
Holiday Wreath Making @ First Friday Snow Hill
We'll supply the materials. You make the wreath!

