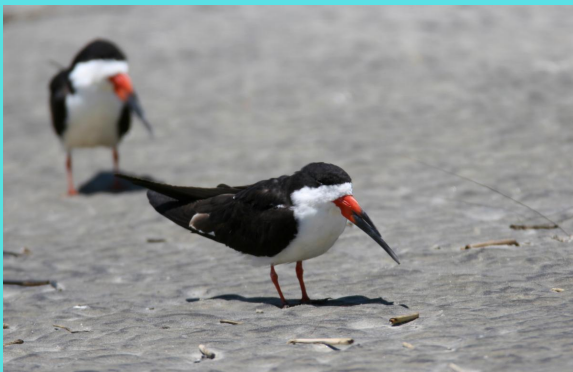




CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

JULY NEWSLETTER 2021



Upcoming Events (click on each for more details)

- [Help Our Horseshoe Crabs](#)
- [Education Programs](#)
- [25th Anniversary Celebration](#)
- [Creature Feature - you have to peek!](#)
- [Ghost Pot Busters](#)

Director's Notes

It's July, coastal bays birds are in full nesting mode. Ospreys have hatched their young and are busy feeding and preparing them to fledge. Blue Herons, egrets, pelicans, gulls, and willets are also busy with their young. Not only do they have to find enough food to feed their broods, they need to be on constant alert for predators who are looking for a quick meal.

Many of these birds nest in the marshes and on the sandy beaches behind Ocean City and Assateague Island. They particularly like to nest on islands that are mostly undisturbed and free from mammalian predators. Unfortunately, these nesting areas are going away.

Did you know that we have lost over 120 acres of our coastal bay nesting islands in the last 25 years? Many of these islands, where vast colonies of terns, skimmers and other colonial nesting birds once nested, no longer exist. This has had a devastating impact on a number of our most renowned coastal bay bird species. Black skimmers, royal terns and common terns have declined by over 90% in our coastal bays. This is primarily due to the lack of nesting habitat. And that is due to the lack of nesting islands in our back bays.

The folks here at the Maryland Coastal Bays Program are working with our partners and volunteers to do something about it.

This past spring, we teamed up with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Audubon Maryland-DC, Conservation Community Consulting and other local groups and volunteers to build and place a nesting platform in Chincoteague Bay. This was specifically built to attract nesting black skimmers and common terns. The team worked to secure permits and work out logistics of when and where to place the artificial islands. MCBP volunteers and expert woodcrafters, John Collins and Todd Peterson, built the raft over the winter. Once the rafts were floated to the location and anchored, there was little more to do than hold our collective breath and wait.

After two weeks, a pair of oystercatchers began nesting on the raft. Not our target species but it was a good sign that birds would use the raft for nesting. Then, two weeks ago, we got word that a pair of common terns were nesting on the rafts. Now there are at least four, and maybe more, common tern nests on the raft. This is great news and we are all very happy and excited about it. [Check this out](#)

While it's wonderful to see the raft used by these nesting pairs of terns, we also recognize that it is not the answer to our colonial nesting bird problem. As DNR Biologist Dave Brinker put it, "This is a Hail Mary pass". The real answer to this issue lies in a long-term plan to rebuild and augment the nesting islands. And that's what we plan to do over the next few years. We'll be working with The Army Corps of Engineers, DNR, Audubon and others to develop a strategy that will address this issue for the foreseeable future.

Thank you to our volunteers and partners for your continued support. Together we can make sure that we have a long-term plan to keep these iconic coastal bay birds here.

Coastal Bays Heroes

This is the sixth in a series of articles celebrating our "Coastal Bay Heroes" – those who have contributed to the establishment and ongoing work of the Maryland Coastal Bays Program.



This month's focus is on Dave Wilson who is one of our pioneers.

Dave joined the Program in 1997 as the public outreach coordinator where he churned out press releases and newspaper articles featuring an aspect of the Coastal Bays. Dave was (and is) a tremendous advocate for our natural world in general and the Coastal Bays in particular. Subjects of his weekly articles ranged far and wide commenting on and clarifying issues such as the county comprehensive plan, a host of development issues, mosquito spraying, encounters with snakes, and backyard birding. He had a central theme in all that he wrote and did - his undying love and concern for the Coastal Bays.

As outreach coordinator he encouraged us to look down as well as into the sky. Dave organized the annual Herp Search which encouraged us to get out in the spring and look on the ground for slimy, slithering creatures called amphibians and reptiles. He was one of the founders of the Delmarva Birding Weekend which encouraged us to look up for migrating and resident birds of all colors and sizes.

Dave replaced Dave Blazer as the executive director in 2008 and continued expressing and exploring his love of the region. As executive director he oversaw the revision of our comprehensive conservation management plan. This is an agreement with our federal, state and local partners that specifies the actions that will be done by the Program and its partners in the next 10 years. Dave considers the retention of the intact agricultural zoning, land restoration and conservation, and garnering public and political support as his most significant successes while he was at with the Program. One regret that he still feels is the loss of Riddle Farm to development.

Program stalwarts Jeanne Lynch and Ilia Fehrer are considered by Dave to be his inspiration. It's hard to sum up 18 years, but when asked for a memorable incident, Dave replied "One of my favorites is when we had Gov. O'Malley, his cabinet, Mayor Meehan and a bunch of other dignitaries out for a paddle to see Skimmer Island. Jim Rapp was on his paddleboard as we paddled toward the island. I was next to the governor as Rapp went on and on about how easy paddleboarding is. Seconds later, a Jetski went by and Rapp, caught by surprise in mid-sentence, flailed around like a plastic bag in the wind until falling face first in the bay in front of the governor. O'Malley looked at me and said, "well, I guess it's not THAT easy." A month or so later at a Big Chicken event, he summoned me over to tell me he had just bought a paddleboard and was working to get at least as good as my hapless cohort".

Diamondback Terrapins



MCBP staff and volunteers, under the guidance of Environmental Scientist Katherine Phillips, just completed the annual diamondback terrapin turtle count. This year marks the 11th year of this monitoring program.

Although the diamondback terrapin is our state mascot, little is known about the true status of their population, other than we almost completely depleted the species in the 1900s as they were considered a delicacy. This monitoring program, as well as others, assists experts in keeping in check with this treasured species.

We are currently still working on the final results of this years survey and will post the results as soon as they are complete.

If you are interested in reading a little more about our terrapins [click here](#)

And this year, a new and exciting addition to protecting our terrapins. Nests for Success is a collaboration between The Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Ocean City Recreation and Parks, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. MCBP Chesapeake Conservation Corps Member, Maddie Talnagi, designed and installed these nesting sanctuaries as her capstone project for her corps year. [Click here](#)

Coastal Bays Summer Interns



Hello, my name is Christy, I'm a recent graduate from UMBC with my bachelors in Environmental Science and Geography. I've interned with the USFWS at the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge doing environmental education and the Chesapeake Bay National

Estuarine Research Reserve assisting with stewardship and research work. I'm so excited for this summer interning with Maryland Coastal Bays, especially for all the opportunities to see wildlife that I haven't gotten to observe in the wild before, while seining, trawling, or surveying. I'm also looking forward to working with kids in the outdoors during the Ocean City explorers summer camp



Hi! I'm Cailyn. I am from Tamaqua, Pennsylvania and recently graduated from Salisbury University with a B.S. in biology and a B.A. in environmental studies. During my time at SU, I studied abroad with the School for Field Studies in Turks and Caicos, where I

studied marine ecology and conservation. I currently serve on the Executive Board for the MaryPIRG Student Climate Action Coalition, which has a goal of making all Maryland Public Universities carbon neutral. My favorite hobby is scuba diving, but I will be happy anywhere near, on, or in the water! I am looking forward to learning about all the Bays' creatures with MCBP and helping others learn about them as well!

Thank you for all the amazing photographs everyone submitted! We are overwhelmed with the response and the beauty that has been captured. Wish we could chose them

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