



February Newsletter 2022

Upcoming Events You Don't want to Miss!
(click on each for more details)

- [New Volunteer Calendar](#) (one click shopping for events all year)
- [Give A Day to the Bay](#)
- [Bay Day is Back!](#)

Director's Notes

A Note from the Director

February is for the Birds

Picture this. It's early in the morning. There's low cloud cover and nary a breath of wind. You hear these guttural sounds overhead. But you cannot quite make out what it is. Maybe a gaggle of geese? No. A flock of snow geese? Maybe. But it sounds different.

Then, suddenly, you see the outline of five white ghosts in vee formation low in the morning sky. Tundra swans, moving so gracefully and purposefully. I'm not sure about you, but it's enough to give me a mild myocardial infarction.

How wonderful it is to hear the bugling of tundras as they fly overhead. But not so much a bugle as a series of barks and hohs and ohs. Take a listen [here](#) to wintering tundra swans at Pungo Lake in North Carolina.

Up until 1982, tundra swans were known as whistling swans. First named by Meriwether Lewis of the legendary Lewis and Clark expedition. Lewis was the official naturalist for the expedition and Clark was the official cartographer. Watching these birds along the Columbia River – hence the Latin name *Cygnus columbianus* - Lewis decided to name the bird "Whistling Swan" due to the peculiar whistling sound these magnificent birds made as they took flight. The "whistling" is attributed to the sound of wind whistling through the wings as they gain altitude.

We are so fortunate that these beautiful and elegant birds grace us every year. All tundras breed in the lower arctic circle but split into two populations during the winter months. The western population, which winters on the west coast and the eastern population which winters in the mid-Atlantic. But they are not here long. Soon, they will be amassing to prepare for their journey back to their breeding grounds in the lower arctic circle. You will see them as they gather in the mid-Chesapeake (particularly near the mouth of the Chester River around East Neck Wildlife Refuge in Kent County) in March as they ready for their trek north. But for now, they are here. Spread out over the Delmarva Peninsula loafing in tidal embayments, eating underwater vegetation in ponds and winter cover crops in farm fields.

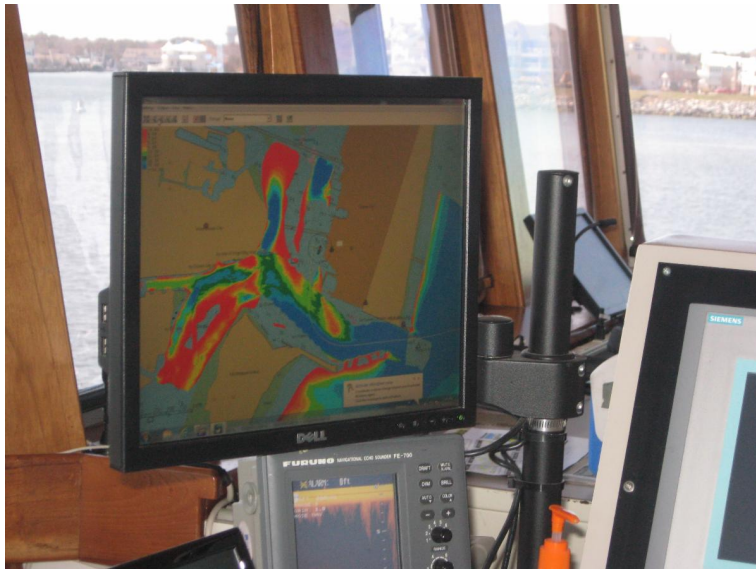
Tundra swans are not the only interesting species that you can see in the Coastal Bays in February. Loons, white pelicans, gannets, grebes, marsh hawks and a whole host of interesting waterfowl. Even the occasional snowy owl. If you are really interested in taking a deep dive into winter birding, check out the folks at [Delmarva Birding Weekends](#). They have a trip coming up in southern Delaware February 11 – 13th. You will have an opportunity to see all manner of unique and interesting birds (and seals).

But if your birding adventures are likely to stay closer to home, there is still plenty to see – even if it is just watching the playful coming and going of chickadees and nuthatches at your birdfeeder. It may look like everything is bedded down for the winter. But there is still plenty of activity and February is a great time for birding

Kevin

Executive Director

Dredging Activities in the Bays



East coast barrier islands systems are essentially mounds of shifting sands that protect the mainland from pounding ocean waves. Inlets form and eventually fill in, dunes grow and recede, islands form and are lost, channels deepen and shoal. Change is the only constant. Its been said that the foolish man builds his house on sand, but it takes a clever man to keep it there.

Since the building of the railroad bridge into Ocean City in 1878, folks have struggled with the ever-shifting sand along our coast. The 1933 storm cut an inlet in the barrier island, which was not unusual since many inlets have emerged after storms. The difference this time was the stabilization of that inlet which changed the landscape drastically. Federal and local government moved quickly after the storm and by the following year the inlet was stabilized with large boulders and the commercial harbor was dredged the following year and federal channels were dredged to 10 ft depth and 200 ft wide. The harbor was the beginning of the offshore fishing industry in Maryland. We owe much to the commercial fishing fleet, because it brought federal dollars and the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) that helped keep the inlet open. In addition, federal funding is provided to maintain the navigation channel from the inlet north to the Isle of Wight and south to South Point in Chincoteague Bay.

Much of the landscape is artificially maintained. Long-term planning for sand movement began with the Ocean City, Maryland, and Vicinity Water Resources Study in which the first phase was a reconnaissance report, dated May 1994, documenting the results of a comprehensive investigation of the water resources problems in the Ocean City area. Four project components were investigated as part of the second phase, ending in 1998. 1. The short-term restoration of the northern end of Assateague Island. 2. Long-term sand management along Assateague Island and Ocean City. 3. Navigation improvements. 4. Environmental restoration in the Coastal Bays.

As a result of the study, the State of Maryland, Worcester County, and Ocean City entered into a long term (50 year) partnership agreement with the COE to perform periodic beach replenishment as needed to maintain adequate storm protection. Per this agreement, the Army Corps of Engineers designs and manages

the needed replenishment dredging operations and pays for 53% of the cost of replenishment. This project has prevented over \$926M in damage. Most recently completed from 16 Oct. 2021 to 1 January 2022, approximately 1.1 million cubic yards of material were placed between from Virginia Ave. in Fenwick Island to 28thSt at a cost of approximately \$16 million.

The Assateague Island Restoration Project was initiated by the COE in 2002 to address the long term sand management along Assateague Island and Ocean City. The Corps has worked with the National Park Service to dredge sand in and around the Inlet. The inlet jetties tend to block the drifting shoreline sand which starves the north end of Assateague. The sand bypass project mitigates the blockage to sand transport and manually moves sand from the shoal near the inlet and onto the Assateague beach. Bypass dredging will be conducted in 2022 in February and September.

The Ocean City Harbor Inlet and Sinepuxent Bay Dredging Program authorized the COE to dredge to a depth of 10 ft plus two ft of overdepth to ensure safe navigation. The Water Resources Study recommended deepening the inlet to 16 ft and the harbor to 14 ft but lack of funding stopped further action. In 2022 the inlet is scheduled for dredging in January, March, May, July, September and November.

In the Scour Hole Study, the COE gathers data on sediment movement in and around a large scour hole near Homer Gudelsky Park and will develop a plan to handle the problem and reduce the risk to shoreline infrastructure. The final model and observation reports are currently under review, and the draft Environmental Assessment Report will be released in the next few months for public comment (30 days). A public meeting is tentatively planned for March 2022.

In addition to the partnership with federal agencies, the Town of Ocean City has a program to dredge the canals on a rotating basis to maintain the channels. A multi-year Dredge Master Plan has been developed based on the Canal Priority and the goal of dredging canals in relatively close geographical proximity to each other in each year in order to maximize efficiency and keep costs down. Work began on the canals included in the plan in 2014. It is estimated that \$500,000 per year is needed to complete the plan.

Maintaining the federal navigation channel created dredge spoil islands that were quickly used by coastal sand nesting birds. Since the maintenance of the inlet, natural island forming forces have been severely diminished. A total of 28 dredge spoil islands were created when the navigation channels were initially dug after the 1933 storm, some of these islands were rebuilt after the 1962 storm, and four islands were restored after the Hurricane Sandy in 2012, only one of which still remains. Sea level rise has hastened erosion rates and bay islands are being lost. Bay bird populations are greatly reduced because of the lack of nesting habitat that the islands provide. Maryland Coastal Bays and partners are currently looking for ways to restore the lost islands.

MCBP Education Coordinator Receives Award



At this year's MAEOE (Maryland Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education) conference, MCBP's Education Coordinator, Liz Wist, was honored with the Robert Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year award!! This distinguished award recognizes an individual who demonstrates leadership and innovation in environmental and outdoor education, and Liz is incredibly deserving of this award.

Liz has been with MCBP for five years and continues to go above and beyond for our Coastal Bays community. Liz brings an unparalleled enthusiasm and energy to all her work and strives to make every education program equally engaging as educational. She truly is a dynamic and innovative educator and has a unique ability to make every person she interacts with feel comfortable and welcome. Liz has accomplished a lot throughout her time at the Coastal Bays Program... from the implementation of the widely successful environmental education festival, Bay Day, to building long lasting partnerships with local teachers and community leaders, and to ensuring that all MCBP programs are as inclusive and accessible as possible. We cannot wait to see what Liz accomplishes next! If you see Liz around town, be sure to congratulate her on this well-deserved award

Terrapin Nesting Sanctuary

The Northern Diamondback Terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*) is a

species of turtle native to brackish tidal marshes of the eastern United States.

Diamondback terrapins are the only species of turtle in the world that reside exclusively in brackish water. Diamondback terrapins have a rich history in the Maryland Coastal Bays and have become a symbol to the state of Maryland. During their nesting season, many females are killed as they attempt to cross coastal roads in search of habitable nesting areas, while habitat loss through coastal development also continues to pose serious threat to successful terrapin nesting.



You can create a nesting sanctuary for terrapins

To create a protected space for safe nesting, otherwise known as a terrapin sanctuary, designate a space that consists of native vegetation and add tons of mortar sand that is strategically shaped into a shallow mound with gentle slopes to most closely replicate the terrapin's natural nesting habitat. Place a protected fence around the space, keep it free of weeds and keep it undisturbed through the months of May, June, and July while nesting occurs.

The below Terrapin Nesting Sanctuary was created in the Northside Park in Ocean City. Maryland Coastal Bays put a call for volunteers to weed the garden in anticipation of creating a suitable nesting site by this spring. Volunteers Larry Sackendorf, Laurie Lawton-Smith and Amy Henderson-Harr, along with help from Joey Nessman from the Ocean City Parks and Recreation Department, weeded the garden in January. The sanctuary garden consists of 22 tons of sand.



To learn more about the Northern diamondback terrapin [click here](#). To learn more about our terrapin gardens, [click here](#).

Ocean City Compost Project

If you missed the November article in The Dispatch on the composting project in Ocean City, it's news worth reprinting! [Click here](#)

And it gets better! Thanks to one of our favorite high school teachers, there now is a successful program at our local high school! [Click here](#)

To learn more about who is responsible for this great initiative, [Click here](#).



Employment Opportunities

MCBP is currently seeking a Coastal Birds Habitat Coordinator [click here](#) for specifics.

Assateague Outfitters is currently has several seasonal opportunities [click here](#) for specifics. Hours and shifts can be flexible.

