



May Newsletter 2022

Upcoming Volunteer Events (click on each for more details)

- [Volunteer Calendar](#) (one click shopping for events all year)
- [Horseshoe Crab Recovery Team](#)

Director's Notes



A Note from the Director

The Month to Explore the Shoreline

June is a crazy month. So much going on with graduations, weddings, festivals, and on and on and on.... Particularly around here on the lower Shore. Everything is moving into fifth gear, and you'd better hold on tight cause things won't slow down till mid-September or so.

Before the crowds really descend, it's good to get out along the shoreline or just tool around the bays and check out the wildlife. In June you should be on the lookout for migrating shorebirds, horseshoe crabs, and diamondback terrapins. Particularly along sandy stretches of bayside beach. Horseshoe crabs and terrapins are nesting this time of year and you won't have to look too far or too long to find either of them.

Diamondback terrapins have a long history in the mid-Atlantic. The story of the Diamondback Terrapin and history of this Country intersect in many ways going all the way back to the Revolutionary War where terrapin were a staple for the soldiers during their long and bitterly cold winters. Terrapin were also a staple for slaves in the tidewater areas of the mid-Atlantic. Then, in a strange turn of events, terrapin became the food of the rich and famous in the early 20th century. Terrapin, considered an epicurean delight, were served at only the fanciest of restaurants and the finest clubs in Baltimore and Philadelphia. So well loved in fact that some folks began farming terrapin in what were known as terrapin "pounds". There's a rather famous pound over in Crisfield that was started by a Mr. A. T. Lavallette who became rather famously known as the Terrapin King.

The horseshoe crab's history goes back much further. About 445 million years to be exact. This species predates the dinosaurs, and they haven't evolved much since then. Why should they? With that kind of track record, best to stay with what you do best. And for horseshoe crabs, that means navigating the sandy bottoms of the ocean and estuaries of the Atlantic.

The horseshoe crab and the terrapin have one thing in common, they both lay their eggs along the sandy tidal shorelines during late spring and early summer. The horseshoe crabs lay their eggs in the inter-tidal area between low and high tide and the diamondback terrapin lay its eggs above mean high tide in the dry sandy deposits in the backshore area. Both eggs provide food for a number of predators. Racoons, foxes, and crows feast on the terrapin eggs while shorebirds, fish, and even sea turtles, like the horseshoe crab eggs. Do terrapin like horseshoe crab eggs? I haven't seen this documented, but they are opportunistic scavengers, so I'll bet they do.

There's another thing that both species have in common, both have suffered from the loss of habitat along the shore. Bulkheading, seawalls and rip rap destroy their preferred nesting habitat. When a shoreline is hardened by rock, timber or sheet pile, this removes nesting area for terrapin and horseshoe crabs – in addition to many other species which rely on this habitat for food, refuge and nesting grounds. That's why the Maryland legislature passed the Living Shoreline Protection Act in 2008, requiring landowners to implement natural solutions to stem shoreline erosion. Living shorelines are an effective way to keep shorelines from eroding and maintain the habitat that these species desperately need.

If you get the time, go visit the living shoreline at Assateague State Park (right next to the boat launch on the west side of the Verrazano Bridge). You'll see an effective living shoreline project and, if you go this

Biologists from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) monitor the returning horseshoe crab population for ecological and scientific research purposes. The department encourages the public to report any spawning activity and sightings of horseshoe crabs. Here's a link you can report your sightings to - [Horseshoe Crab Volunteer Angler Survey](#).

Kevin

Executive Director

Nesting Platforms Begins Second Year

The partnership of Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Audubon Mid-Atlantic, and Maryland Coastal Bays Program is continuing an innovative conservation project to preserve three of Maryland's state listed endangered colonial nesting waterbirds - the Common Tern, Royal Tern, and Black Skimmer.



The project, now in its second year, is providing a floating wooden-framed platform as a nesting site for endangered colonial waterbirds, which have declined by a staggering 90-95% since the mid-1980s due to sea level rise and the erosion of their natural barren sand nesting islands in the coastal bays. The initial year of the project was an immediate success. The platform was successfully used for nesting by 23 pairs of Common Terns, making it the largest breeding colony of this species in the Coastal Bays in 2021.

“The immediate success of the project is encouraging,” said Director of Bird Conservation Dr. David Curson of Audubon Mid-Atlantic. “But the fact that the largest Common Tern colony in the coastal bays system last year was on this small artificial island illustrates just how dire the situation is for these birds. In 2003, there were more than 500 pairs of Common Terns nesting at six natural colony sites in the coastal bays – today, most of these former sites have been degraded by erosion and some have been washed away entirely.”

This year the partnership has expanded the size of the nesting platform from 1,024 square feet to 2,304 square feet, by adding five new raft sections to the four used in 2021. The rafts are latched together in a square formation that flexes at the joints as waves roll beneath it. This design allows the platform to safely withstand large waves and strong winds during storm events. The project team hopes the larger platform will not only support a larger tern colony, but also may attract Black Skimmers to nest alongside the terns.

The project team has also expanded in 2022. Maryland Coastal Bays Program hired Archer Larned, Ph.D., to the newly created position of Coastal Bird Habitat Coordinator to assist with the project, using funds provided by US Wind. “We will monitor the platform closely through the 2022 breeding season,” said Larned. “Early signs are encouraging. Remote cameras installed on the platform show that about 50 Common Terns are already using it for roosting, and we are hoping that nesting activity will begin soon”.

Dave Brinker, of Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage Service, has been monitoring colonial nesting waterbird populations in Maryland since 1985.

“This project shows great promise in offering endangered colonial waterbirds much-needed nesting sites,” Brinker said. “But in order to fully recover and sustain populations of terns and skimmers in the coastal bays it is essential that we restore and maintain former sand islands that have been lost to erosion. To achieve that we will need a long-term strategy that allocates locally dredged sand for island restoration.”

DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service is providing technical assistance, materials, and funding through federal Pittman-Robertson funds that the state receives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Match for these federal funds comes from Maryland Program Open Space funds used to purchase land for state Wildlife Management Areas and from the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species fund (state income tax checkoff). Audubon Mid-Atlantic and Audubon's Seabird Institute are providing technical support and assistance with planning, coordination, and raft construction under a contract with DNR. Maryland Coastal Bays Program is assisting with local support, planning, coordination, and providing local volunteer assistance.

"Addressing the population declines of these important bird species is a high priority for our department and our partners," said Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "We are pleased to support innovative measures and long-term efforts to give them the best possible chance to rebound."

For more information on this project contact Archer Larned at alarned@mdcoastalbays.org or by calling 40-213-2297 ext.107.

Chandler Joiner Joins MCBP as full time Environmental Educator



We are thrilled to announce that earlier this month, Chandler Joiner has accepted the position of Environmental Educator at MCBP. Despite her assuming a new full time role, Chandler is quite the familiar face at Coastal Bays.

Chandler has been with MCBP for the past three years in different capacities including as a Chesapeake Conservation Corps member and a contractual staff member. You may have seen Chandler around the bays leading an educational field experience or the OC Estuary Explorers camp, at our Bay Day festival, or at one of the many Living Local community events she organizes. She brings amazing experience in program development and facilitation to this position.

As environmental education has really taken root in the area over the past decade, we embrace this opportunity to more intentionally share our work and keep our community actively engaged. Join us in welcoming Chandler! We are excited to see the innovative projects you create. To read more about Chandler and her role, please visit our [website](#).

Explore the Estuary Program #2 Resiliency and Innovation in the Coastal Bays

Join MCBP staff on Wednesday, July 6th from 4-6 pm for a tour around the southern Coastal Bays that is focused on resiliency efforts and innovative projects within the bays themselves.

Attendees will hear from Archer Larned, MCBP's new Coastal Bird Habitat Conservation Coordinator, about the artificial bird nesting platforms in Chincoteague Bay, and other staff members on the living shoreline projects in Sinepuxent Bay.

This unique tour will take you by water to all of these locations. This tour is limited to 28 people, so don't wait to register! The MCBP Explore the Estuary Program offers the unique opportunity for adults to continue to broaden their knowledge of the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed. Click [here](#) to register



Big Thank You Shout Out!



The Maryland Coastal Bays Program would like to thank Rose Goodwin, a GIS student from Worcester Technical High School for assisting MCBP in mapping island loss throughout the Coastal Bays watershed.

Under the guidance of Silviya Gallo, Worcester Tech's pre-engineering, GIS, and math teacher, Rose had worked on digitizing and calculating the areas of all the islands throughout the watershed to determine loss since 2008. Even though this was a huge undertaking, Rose stepped up to the

challenge and accepted this project as his GIS capstone project during his Senior year. We also cannot forget to thank the other GIS students and Silviya for assisting with this project!

This map will not only act as a visual aid to see where island loss has occurred in the Coastal Bays, but it will also help MCBP gain potential funding to restore some of the islands that are critical habitat to our bay birds. MCBP staff thanks you for this amazing contribution, Rose, and wishes you success in your future endeavors!

Farming Cost Share Funding



Please share with your farming friends and families:

There is funding available for farmers who are interested in implementing conservation practices!

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has announced the raising of cost-share funding caps for 34 qualifying conservative-minded best management practices (BMPs).

Maryland farmers interested in applying for these cost-share grants should contact their local soil conservation district or MDA at 410-841-5864. Here

farmers can learn what practices are covered by this funding and how to apply!

Worcester County 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

Everyone has an opinion! But not everyone appreciates an opinion, our beloved Worcester County totally appreciates your opinion.

Earlier this year we provided you information on the opportunity for you to review a plan and give your opinion on land preservation, and parks and recreation.

The county has completed a draft of this 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPRP). The draft is available for you to review the plan and make any final suggestions.

You have until July 22 to review this plan and to comment. So, take a moment to review their hard work on a plan for the future of our county. Click [here](#) to review.



Summer Environmental Trips on the OC Bay Hopper



Come join MCBP this summer for an environmental trip on the OC Bay Hopper! You'll have MCBP experts on every trip who will explain what the Maryland Coastal Bays Program is doing to preserve the beautiful Coastal Bays. You'll also learn about the incredible wildlife inhabiting the coastal bay region, and maybe get the chance to handle some of these creatures! To register, [Click here](#).

Seal Steward Program Transition



The Maryland Coastal Bays Program is excited to announce that the Seal Steward Program will become a National Aquarium volunteer program in the fall of 2022.

As the original lead on this program, we just don't have the best words to explain our gratitude on working with so many amazing, passionate volunteers.

The Aquarium has been a strong partner in the Seal Steward initiative. Kate Shaffer, the Stranding Response & Triage Manager for the Aquarium's Animal Rescue Program, will be taking the lead on this volunteer opportunity. You can contact her at kshaffer@aquarium.org if you are interested in becoming a steward.

