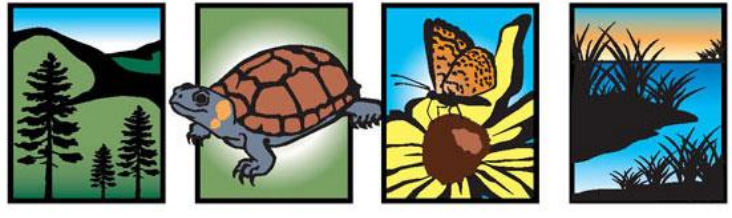


*From Mountains to Sea:*  
**Maryland Natural Areas**



Kerry Wixted  
Wildlife and Heritage Service

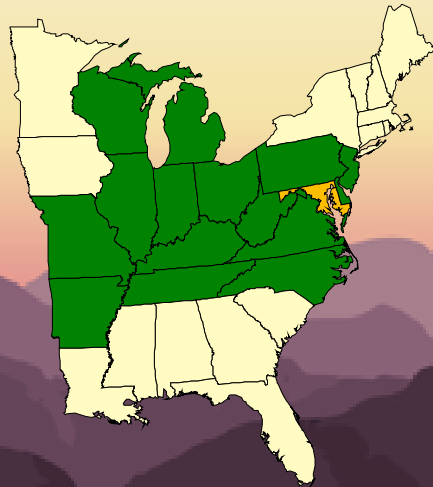


1

*In the Beginning...*



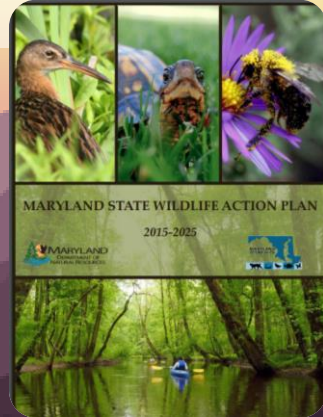
Dave Brinker



2

# Why Designate a Natural Area?

- Get people OUTSIDE!
- Enjoy MD's natural heritage
- Recognize unique areas



3

# Team Approach

- Wildlife & Heritage Service
- State Parks
- State Forests
- Land Acquisition & Planning
- Aquatic Programs
- Maryland Geological Survey



4

# What is a Natural Area?

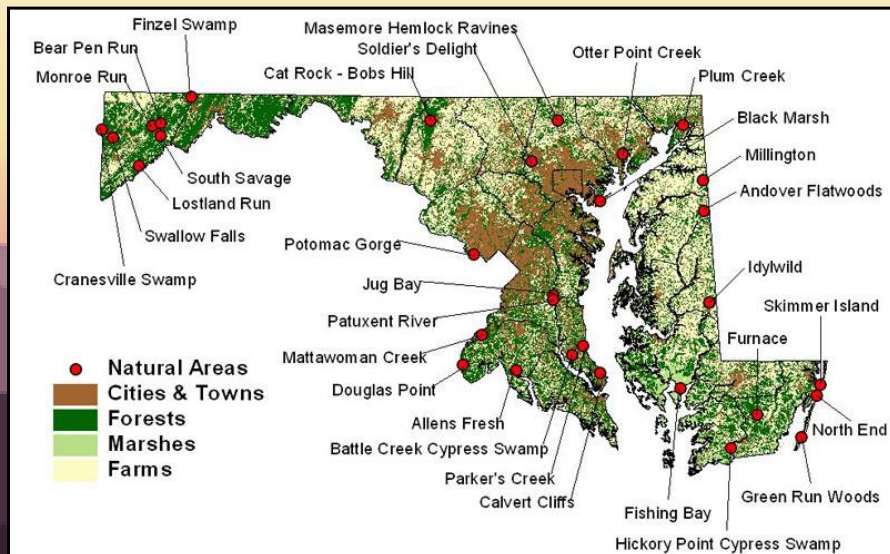
- Voluntary recognition
- Exemplary natural features
  - Geology
  - Natural Communities
  - Rare Species
- Sustainably managed
- County, State, Federal & NGO properties



Patuxent River Park by Kerry Wixted

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# Natural Areas Map



6




# Natural Areas Guide

Maryland Natural Areas Guide

## ALLENS FRESH, CHARLES COUNTY

The expansive marshes of Allens Fresh have provided optimum in pursuit of a bald eagle or osprey soaring overhead, a heron stalking the shoreline for prey, or perhaps the rise of a yellow perch or a glimpse of a northern river otter sliding down a marsh bank. Visitors witness the diminishing influence of tide and salinity as they proceed upstream. Brackish tidal marshes of cordgrass transition to fresh tidal marshes of wild rice, rice cutgrass and pickersweed. The receding tide exposes sandy mudflats that provide habitat for the globally rare Long's bittercress (*Caulanthus longii*, State listed as Endangered) and the rare wetland flower, spiny lophocarpus (*Spartina cynosuroides*). Beyond the marshes, tidal shrublands and forests of willow oak, green ash, and swamp rose yield to montane forests of cherrybark oak, red maple, blackgum and sweetgum.

The marshes and woody forests of Allens Fresh help to maintain the water quality of the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay by absorbing nutrients and chemicals and trapping sediments that run off from roads, farm fields, and subdivisions. Even so, the sandy, tidal mudflats and rice plants are threatened by excessive runoff. Allens Fresh comprises more than 250 acres owned by the State and managed by the Maryland Park Service.



**Rarity Refuge**

Long's bittercress is a small plant of the mustard family named after Rip and Long, a Pennsylvania botanist who discovered it in the early 1900s. Its flowers have no petals, but produce tiny versions of the slender capsules that are typical of this plant family. Fewer than 100 populations of this plant are known to exist worldwide, and Allens Fresh harbors one of only two populations on Maryland's Western Shore.

Far left: The slow-moving, tidal waters of Allens Fresh, combined with ample vegetation, provide food and shelter for yellow perch.

Left: Look for the handsome scarlet tanager within the forest interior. Despite their bold coloring, the birds are often overlooked due to their secretive nature.

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Long's Bittercress
- Intertidal Shoreline
- Osprey and Bald Eagle Nesting Site

**THE BASICS**

- Water Trails
- No Facilities
- State Accessible Only

**WATCH OUT FOR!**

- Biting Flies
- Mosquitoes
- Stranding at Low Tide (jump tide hole)


Maryland Natural Areas Guide page 1

Maryland Natural Areas Guide


## ALLENS FRESH, CHARLES COUNTY

### Triumphant Return

Bald eagles and ospreys are now abundant in Allens Fresh and along the shoreline of Charles County, but this wasn't always the case. The widespread use of DDT and organochlorine pesticides in the mid-1900s led to a severe decline in the numbers of bald eagles and ospreys in the United States. These chemicals became concentrated through the food chain, absorbed by aquatic plants and fish, the birds' preferred food, and caused the birds to produce weak egg shells that broke in the nest or did not hatch. The bald eagle was federally listed as Endangered in 1967. With the ban on DDT in 1972, populations of eagles and ospreys began to recover. In 1995, the bald eagle was federally downlisted to Threatened, and in 2007 it was delisted. Maryland delisted the bald eagle from state regulation in 2010. Between 1997 and 2004, biologists documented a 10-fold population increase in bald eagles in Maryland. By the late 1990s over 1,500 pairs of ospreys were nesting in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Bald eagles and ospreys are now great examples of conservation success stories. As our nation's symbol, the bald eagle continues to be protected under the U.S. Fish and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and both the bald eagle and the osprey are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



Ospreys feed almost exclusively on fish and will plunge up to three feet underwater to capture their slippery prey. They will readily use man-made platforms to construct their lousy stick nests.




Bald eagles prefer to build their massive stick nests in large trees along rivers and swamps where they have easy access to aquatic prey. Some nests have been known to weigh as much as a ton.

**Directions**

From Waldorf: Take US 301 (Crain Highway) south past Waldorf to LA Plaza. Continue south about 9 miles to MD 234 (Bucks Creek Road). Turn left (east) and proceed about a mile to the canoe/launch access area on the north side of the road on either side of the Bucks Creek Road bridge. Park in one of the access areas; keep alert to oncoming traffic.

**CONTACT**

Maryland Park Service  
Southern Maryland Recreation Complex  
2750 Swenden Point Road  
Marbury, MD 20658  
P: 301-743-7613  
For more information:  
[www.dcm.natural.gov/wildlife/PublicInfo/wmsouthern.asp](http://www.dcm.natural.gov/wildlife/PublicInfo/wmsouthern.asp)



Special Note: Allens Fresh Natural Area is used occasionally by humans.

Maryland Natural Areas Guide page 2

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# Cranesville Swamp

- 15,000 yr old boreal peat bog
- Cool plants



Photos by: TNC



Sundew by D. Kazayak



Sundew by K. Wixted

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# Cranesville Swamp



- Larch, spruce & Northern Saw-whet Owls



Photos by: K. Wixted

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# Swallow Falls



- MD's largest waterfall
- Old growth hemlock



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# Swallow Falls



- Northern bird species



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker by Dfaulder, Wikimedia



Pine siskin by Linda Tanner, WC



Appalachian tiger swallowtail by K. Kunte

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# Lostland Run



- Old growth forest
- Wildflower diversity



Photos by: Kerry Wixted

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# Cat Rock/Bob's Hill



- Quartzite outcrops



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# Cat Rock/Bob's Hill



- Allegheny Woodrat
- Bobcats & porcupines



Photo by: Gary Kramer, USFWS



Photos by: D. Kazyak

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# Soldiers Delight



- Globally rare serpentine savanna
- >25 rare species



Photo by: W. Tyndall



Photo by: Bill Sherman

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# Soldiers Delight



- Globally rare serpentine savanna
- >25 rare species



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# Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary

- Wild rice marsh
- Sora & other marsh birds



Photo by: Rob Bole CC by NC 2.0



Sora by: USFWS

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# Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary

- Wild rice marsh
- Reptile & amphibian diversity



Marbled salamander by: Kerry Wixted



Osprey chick by: Kerry Wixted

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# Potomac Gorge



- Over 60 rare species!
- Waterfalls & scour areas



Nantucket Shadbush by: Kerry Wixted



Magnolia Warbler by Cephas

19

# Potomac Gorge



- Wildflowers!



Sessile Trillium

Wild Blue Phlox



Wild Pink



Virginia Bluebells

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# Battle Creek Cypress Swamp

- Northernmost bald cypress
- Red turtlehead



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# Battle Creek Cypress Swamp

- Treefrogs abound
- Cypress Sphinx Moth



Photo by: Charlene Nutter



Photos by: K. Wixted



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# Allens Fresh



- Brackish > fresh water marsh
- Bald Eagle hotspot



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# Fishing Bay



- Tidal, brackish marsh
- Birding hotspot!



Photo by: Lynn Davidson



Photo by: NY Gov



Photo by: USFWS

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## Millington & Andover Flatwoods



- Carolina bays
- Amphibian hotspots



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## Skimmer Island



- Colonial Waterbird breeding site
- Closed during breeding



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# Skimmer Island



- Colonial Waterbird breeding site
- Closed during breeding



By Dan Pancamo CC BY-SA 2.0

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# Skimmer Island

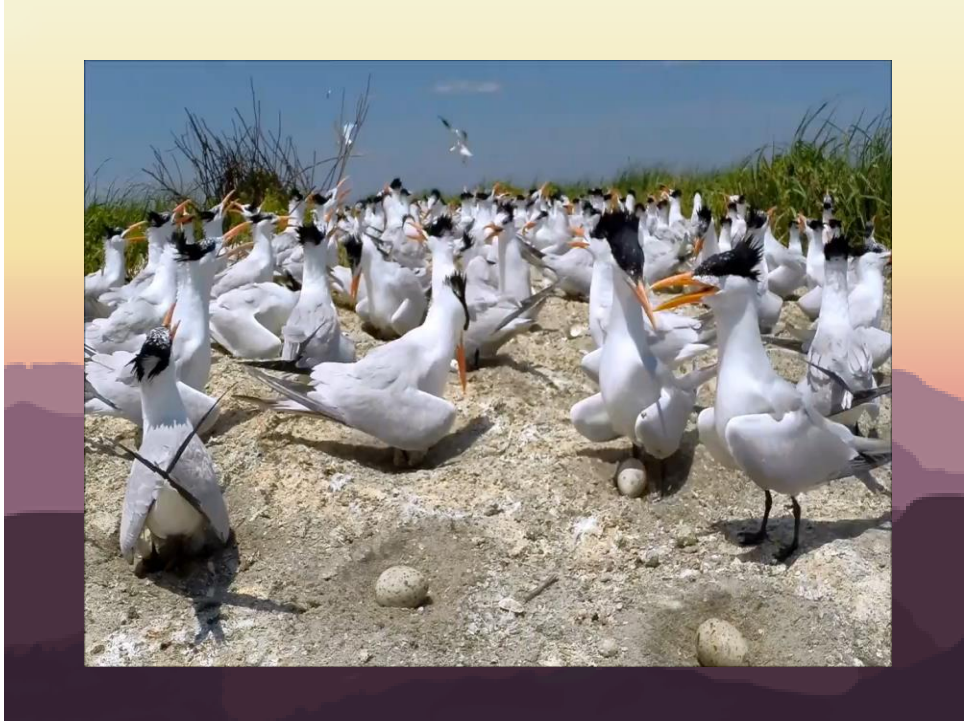


- Replenishment
- Horseshoe crab breeding



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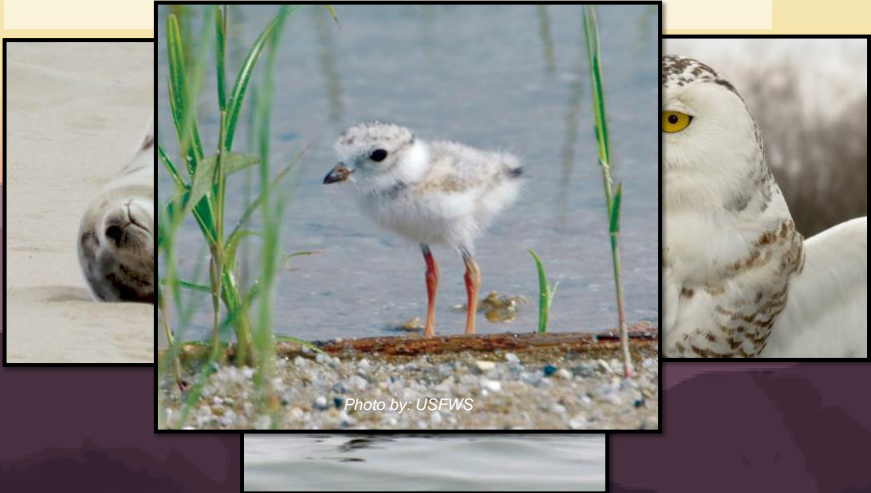


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## North End- Assateague



- Birds, birds & birds!



*Photo by: USEWS*

*Photos by Kerry Wixted*

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# Green Run Woods



- Old Growth Maritime Forest
- Beach Plum
- Brown-headed nuthatch



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# Future of Natural Areas

- Inclusion of new sites
- Interactive maps
- Continued management



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# Lend Your Support!

## Chesapeake Bay & Endangered Species Fund

*Diamonds are Forever*



 SUPPORT NON-GAME WILDLIFE  
CHECK LINE 35 TODAY  
<http://bit.ly/checkline35>



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# Questions?

Kerry Wixted

[Kerry.wixted@maryland.gov](mailto:Kerry.wixted@maryland.gov)



MARYLAND Natural Areas

[dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/NaturalAreas/home.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/NaturalAreas/home.aspx)



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