

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES – AUGUST 18, 2021

Chairman Lou Compton called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. This meeting was held via teleconference and videoconference. Chairman Compton asked for a roll call of individuals who were on the “call.” Unfortunately, because of the anonymity of Google Meet callers, it was impossible to determine the identity of every participant.

Approval for August 18, 2021, Meeting Agenda

- Director Peditto mentioned that the Secretary needs clarification as to whether it is necessary to have an additional discussion on the Wildlife and Heritage Service vacancies and their impact on Pittman-Robertson (PR) funding.
- Motion to Add Item to the Agenda:
 1. Commissioner Michael moved to add that clarification under Old Business for August 18, 2021, Meeting Agenda.
 2. Commissioner Wagner seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.
- Motion to Approve the Agenda:
 1. Commissioner Schroyer moved to accept August 18, 2021, Meeting Agenda.
 2. Commissioner Michael seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Approval for Minutes from June 16, 2021, Meeting

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Michael moved to accept the June 16, 2021 meeting minutes as presented.
 2. Commissioner Wagner seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Natural Heritage Program Update – Featuring Nesting Rafts for Endangered Seabirds in Maryland: A Desperate Measure –Science Program Manager Gwen Brewer gave a presentation.

- Science Program Manager Gwen Brewer gave a presentation on the Nesting Rafts for Endangered Seabirds in Maryland: A Desperate Measure. [ATTACHMENT A]
- There are several species that staff calls colonial nesting birds that nest on islands, beaches, and the coast. For example, the royal terns like to nest together, which is demonstrated in slide two. Colonial nesting birds can protect their young better because there are very close to each other in these opened areas.
- Ecologist Dave Brinker has been monitoring these species since 1985.
- Skimmer Island has declined over the years. These islands changed with storms, and people have altered some of the sand deposition patterns with impacts on the natural movement of sand.
- The long-term goal is to get 2% of that amount of sand dredged up every year to replenish these maintenances, and creating the nesting areas could make a huge difference.
- Staff uses the artificial nesting raft to help colonial nesting birds while waiting to achieve the long-term goal.
- Science Program Manager Gwen Brewer displayed a video of common tern chicks on the artificial raft using the shelter boxes made by the Assateague Coast Trust – Coast Kids.
- Science Program Manager Gwen Brewer played PBS on June 6, 2021, news clips about the nesting raft. Then, on July 24, 2021, PBS did a follow-up on the nesting raft.
- There are 42 common tern eggs on the nesting raft at 23 nests, making it the largest breeding colony in the Coastal Bays this year. Staff figured that there were about 50 pairs spread out at smaller colonies along the Coastal Bays. Historically background information, the largest common tern in the territory in the Coastal Bays was on Skimmers Island in 1995, 525 breeding pairs. This information provided the Commission an idea

of what staff is facing regarding protecting and managing the endangered seabirds. Hopefully, this information gives the Commission idea of what the team is facing.

- Staff will be marking the chicks to see which ones will return next year.
- Staff will take down the raft, haul it to shore, complete maintenance, and store it away next year.
- The Pittman-Robertson Fund and partners' contributions of their time help get this project going. The most expensive raft part was the specialized rolling floats. It cost around \$45,000.
- Q&A Section:
 1. Commissioner Wagner informed the Commission that the Bay Weekly had an excellent article on the nesting raft.
 2. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked how does staff define the Coastal Bays and what marks the raft?
 - a. The definition of Maryland's Coastal Bays in this discussion references Assateague Island's backside to the mainland on the other side.
 - b. To anchor the raft, staff used boat anchors. There are markers and lights on the raft so that boaters won't hit the raft. It is in shallow water.
 3. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked what is the reason for having to take it down.
 - a. Staff does not want the raft to damage during heavy storms; especially, during the hurricane season.
 - b. Bringing the raft to shore reduces the wear and tear on the raft.
 4. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked when does staff put the raft out and took it down.
 - a. Staff will put the raft out in mid or late April, at the latest early May, because the birds are flying around, checking out places to nest.
 - b. It depends on when the birds are done, maybe in September unless there are late nesters. But, ultimately, staff will wait until the chicks fledge and the terns have left.
 5. Commissioner Michael asked did staff only use one raft.
 - a. Yes, there is only one raft. This raft was a pilot project. Staff wanted to see if it would work before installing a second raft.
 - b. Staff did obtain a permit to have a second raft out for next year.
 - c. It is a challenge to locate different locations for other rafts.
 6. Since these birds are colonized, Commissioner Michael asked if the birds, including the young, would return next year to use the raft.
 - a. Terns will return if the raft is a successful nest area. The adults will tend to return to the raft for nesting. If the raft is gone, the terns will look for other places to nest. These terns probably have successfully nested somewhere else in the past.
 - b. Staff is hoping that the Corps of Engineers will help restore tern habitat.
 - c. The common terns are about a foot apart, so that raft has a lot of space for the terns to nest.
 - d. There are good food sources for the terns near the raft.
 7. Commissioner Michael asked if this location could support another raft from the Corps of Engineers' dredging sand.
 - a. The staff's goal is to replenish the islands and other suitable locations with the dredging sand from the Corps of Engineers.
 - b. Skimmers Island would be one of the locations and other areas that staff would like to replenish with sand to build and maintain so the terns can return to their natural habitat.
 8. Commissioner Michael asked how much WHS put into the cost of \$45,000 for this project.
 - a. WHS contributed 25% - and 75% came from federal funds.
 - b. Audubon Mid-Atlantic helped with some technical items.
 - c. Maryland Coastal Bays donated their time.
 9. Commissioner Michael asked as for ecological of the loss of habitat, is it the location of the bridges and channeling or is it sea level rise.
 - a. For some islands like Skimmers Island, it would be both the change in the water flow and lack of replenishment.
 - b. For the island further south of the Coastal Bays, sea-level rise is a factor in the storm's intensity and frequencies.

- c. For the upper part of Ocean City, the natural flow of sediment has been another factor along with sea-level rise.
10. Commissioner Michael indicated that these projects always seem to have fun intended consequences, sometimes positive and negative. Commissioner Michael asked what the positive and negative implications of this pilot project that staff have received are.
 - a. Staff is concerned about people viewing this project as the solution rather than the true long-term solution of the sand placement and replenishment of existing islands.
Director Peditto added that staff members like Ecologist Dave Brinker are billing a lot of time to this project, which is good. But, unfortunately, Ecologist Dave Brinker is not able to do work on other projects when focused so finely on something like this raft effort. It is another example of why we need to keep our unit fully-staffed.

WHS Information and Education Program Update – Associate Director Karina Stonesifer gave the presentation.

- Associate Director Karina Stonesifer mentioned that she had initially tasked Education Specialist Kerry Wixted to present the Information and Education Program Update. Unfortunately for us, Ms. Kerry Wixted has left State-Service for a new opportunity.
- Associate Director Karina Stonesifer presented the WHS Information and Education Program Update. **[ATTACHMENT B]**
- There are three vacancies in the Information and Education Program.
- Chairman Compton informed the Commission that he had some National Archery in Schools Program training scheduled to bring in nine more schools.
- Commissioner Michael indicated that the I & E vacancies update aligns with the Old Business item that was added to the agenda.
- Questions and Answers Section:
 1. Commissioner Michael asked if there were impediments in filling these vacancies on the budget side of things.
 - a. The Information and Education Program Manager position has cleared all the internal processes. It is in the queue for online posting but that has been ongoing for several weeks (pending since August 9th).
 2. Commissioner Michael asked is there a trend that the Commission can help with the retention of high-quality staff.
 - a. Both staff members left for personal reasons so we don't see an issue with retention. In fact most of the staff in WHS will retire from the Department.
 - b. Kerry Wixted is now working with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on invasive species so she is still nearby and supporting our mission and goals in a different way.
 - c. The Commission will do all it can to support and maintain good staff and recruit good staff.

Natural Resources Police Update

- Commissioner Michael had a comment for NRP issues. With the heavy use of State Parks, there have been backups to get into the parks, which have caused a potential increase in NRP issuing traffic and usage violations. Commission is concerned about time spent on these tasks versus wildlife-related enforcement efforts.

Maryland Farm Bureau Update – No Report.

Old Business –

- Chairman Compton commented about the letter sent to the Secretary about WHS Vacancies and Pittman-Robertson (PR) Fund on behalf of the entire Commission. Chairman read at the section of the letter, “As we discussed in our meeting, the increase in federal funding for wildlife management continues to grow as the sales (and associated excise tax) for firearms, ammunition, and archery tackle continue on a path of sustained growth. We look forward to working closely with your team to

better leverage these dollars, serve our citizens and create more life-long conservation stewards from the community of enthusiasts who are looking for the chance to join our ranks.”

1. At this point, the Commission is not asking for any further meetings with the Office of the Secretary. However, the Commission expressed their gratitude for the meeting with the Office of the Secretary and addressing the WHS vacancies and PR fund.
2. The Commission members indicated that they do not want to continue reviewing what happened in the past, instead they want to help WHS spend the license and PR fund dollars available now.
3. Commissioner Michael commented on the re-budgeting that sounded confusing. Commissioner Michael asked if the re-budgeting process is working better with new tools in the tools box in getting matching funds.
4. Director Peditto asked Commissioner Michael what he meant by re-budgeting.
5. Commissioner Michael responded that Director Peditto informed the Commission that WHS submitted an amendment to the budget, which sounds like good news.
 - a. Director Peditto added that it is in the State’s budget. Director Peditto gave an example of the budget process with the Brown’s Branch WMA match because the approval of the match came in the middle of the fiscal year, which required an amendment to the stateside budget at the end of the fiscal year – thus adding several million to the close-out budget.
 - b. Commissioner Michael commented that he has no expertise in this matter. Commissioner Michael was looking at trends. Commissioner Michael admitted that WHS is doing better.
6. Commissioner Michael asked with the Commission’s approval that Associate Director Tim Larney present a 10-Year Trend on Reversion of PR funds in a graph at the November 17, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Michael noted that there would be a bump in the trend, but that is water under the bridge.
 - a. Director Peditto informed the Commission that he could go back five years. Director Peditto asked if that would be okay with the Commission.
 - b. Commissioner Michael commented that it would be fine.
 - c. Staff will produce the graph along with the staffing update presentation in November.
7. Chairman Compton will outline these items in an email to the Secretary. Chairman Compton will run the email communication by the members of the Commission before sending it.

New Business –

- The Commission received a letter from Allan Ellis, Founder of Bucks-Bears-Stags, LLC [ATTACHMENT C], about becoming recognized by the Department to be the authority of Maryland’s big game records. Mr. Ellis joined the discussion on this topic to offer input and answer questions.
 1. Mr. Ellis has been involved with Maryland’s outdoors and promoting it for a very long time, ensuring the people are aware of what is going on, particularly with the Wildlife and Heritage Service. In addition, Mr. Ellis has Maryland’s Outdoor Radio Show and a couple of published magazines along with founding Bucks-Bears-Stags.
 2. Mr. Ellis learned that the Maryland Trophy Deer Contest was inactive. So the team of Measurers decided to form a plan to publish a Maryland Record Book.
 3. Mr. Ellis read the Bucks-Bears-Stag, LLC Mission Statement to celebrate the long-honored heritage of recreational hunting in Maryland. “Excellent habitat, fertile soil, and science-based wildlife management have given us a world-class White-Tailed Deer herd, a robust and expanding American Black Bear population, and a unique “Maryland-only” residency of Sika Deer. We celebrate the success of Maryland’s wildlife management by acknowledging the successful hunters and by honoring the finest examples of those legally harvested Maryland bucks, bears, and stags. We also believe that the future of hunting rests with the young. We encourage youth participation and the continued participation of men, women, and seniors in our noble pursuit of wild game. We also believe it is our Mission to support the non-profit organizations that promote and protect our publicly-owned sustainable resources.” The Mission Statement is on the Bucks, Bears, Stags website at <https://www.bucks-bears-stags.com/>.

4. Mr. Ellis also gave a brief background on the history of big measuring. He added that there are 12 official measurers with Bucks-Bears-Stags LLC and 4 administrative and technology duties staff. Bucks-Bears-Stags LLC is the only active measurers' organization in Maryland. There is a lot of interest, especially on social media. Maryland continues to produce quality wildlife species. It is a testament to the Wildlife and Heritage service balancing many factors going into wildlife management.
 5. Chairman Compton outlined that the Maryland Bowhunters Society endorsed the Maryland Trophy Deer Contest. As a former officer with the Maryland Bowhunters Society, the Maryland Bowhunters Society separated itself from the Maryland Trophy Deer Contest when the effort was no longer being actively managed. For example, the records were not current or shared with the public for several years. Hunters started to complain about why the Maryland Trophy Deer Contest was no longer available or active in managing the 'contest'. Chairman Compton added that he is impressed with the Bucks-Bears-Stags LLC and the Maryland Bowhunters Society supports the Bucks-Bears-Stags LLC.
 6. Chairman Compton mentioned that Mr. Ellis is asking the Commission to formally adopt a recommendation to endorse Bucks-Bears-Stags as the official recording-keeping service for Maryland.
- Bucks-Bears-Stags (BBS) Motion:
 1. Motion by Commissioner Wagner to adopt BBS as the official record-keeping service for Maryland deer and bears.
 2. Second Commissioner Gulbrandsen.
 3. Motion carried with two abstentions.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.
The next meeting will be on September 15, 2021, at Deep Creek Lake Discovery Center.

Attendance

Members:	L. Compton, S. Boyles Griffin, E. Gulbrandsen, S. Keithley, J. Michael, J. Schroyer, and C. Wagner
Absent:	T. Gregor
Guest:	A. Ellis
Staff:	G. Brewer, T. Larney, B. Lowe, J. McKnight, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, and K. Stonesifer

Nesting Rafts for Endangered Seabirds in Maryland: A Desperate Measure

ATTACHMENT A



A Partnership between Maryland DNR, Audubon
Maryland-DC, Maryland Coastal Bays Program

Colonial Nesting Birds



ENDANGERED



Royal Tern

ENDANGERED



Common Tern

ENDANGERED



Black Skimmer



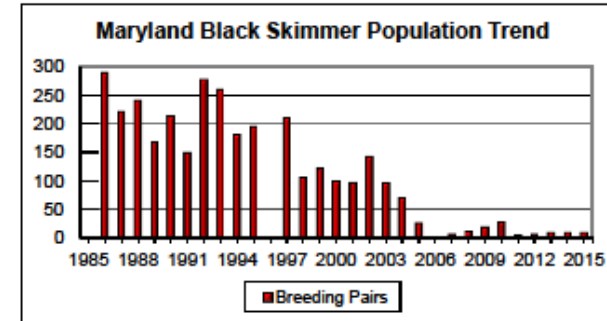
Endangered Seabirds in Md Species Trends, 1985-2015

- **Black Skimmer.** State-endangered. 95+% decline, near extirpation.
- **Common Tern.** State-endangered. ~90% decline in population.
- **Royal Tern.** State-endangered. Declining, very marginal colony site.

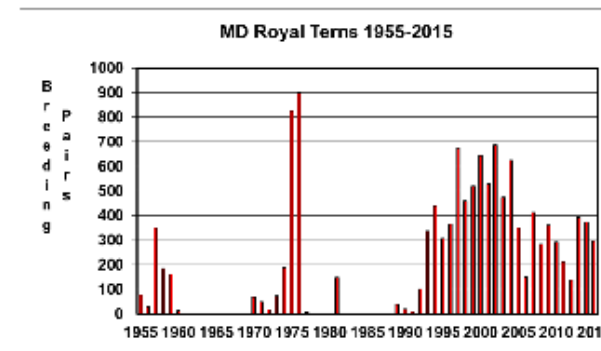
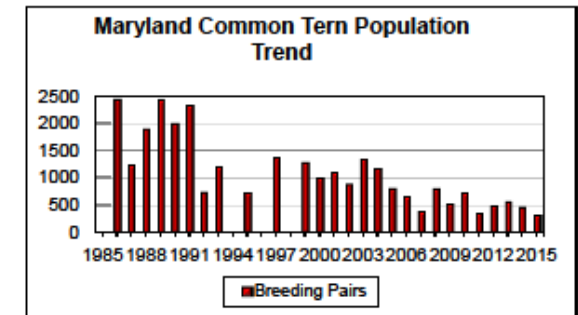
Monitoring by DNR, MCBP and public volunteers.

2020: No nesting success by these species on Coastal Bays islands. Skimmer Island reduced to remnant.

POPULATION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES ARE CONTINUING TO DECLINE DUE TO LOSS IN HABITAT



Black skimmer with chick



Common tern

Royal terns nest primarily on one island in the coastal bays, so they are very vulnerable to habitat loss. Royal terns are shown below



Erosion of nesting islands –primary reason for species declines: Robins Marsh

Before 2013



21 May, 2013



29 July, 2014



Skimmer Island



Reasons for island-nesters decline

Human disturbance



Goal: Return breeding populations of Common Tern and Black Skimmer to sustainable levels in Maryland.

- Focus on Coastal Bays.
- Combine two strategy components:
 - Work with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over long term to create and maintain dredge material and other islands, including Skimmer Island.
 - Use artificial nesting rafts as a stopgap measure.



Canada's Cool Idea:

Installation in Toronto- new design (left) and old design (right) for Common Tern nesting raft. New design includes improved floats, sturdy construction, and predator guards; also flashing on sides. Both models have chick shelters. These are features incorporated into the Maryland project.

Maryland
Model under
construction.

Each raft
section is
8 X 16 ft.

8 Rafts make
up the island:
final size 32 X
32 ft.





Chick shelters were painted at home by Assateague Coast Trust Coast Kids Program

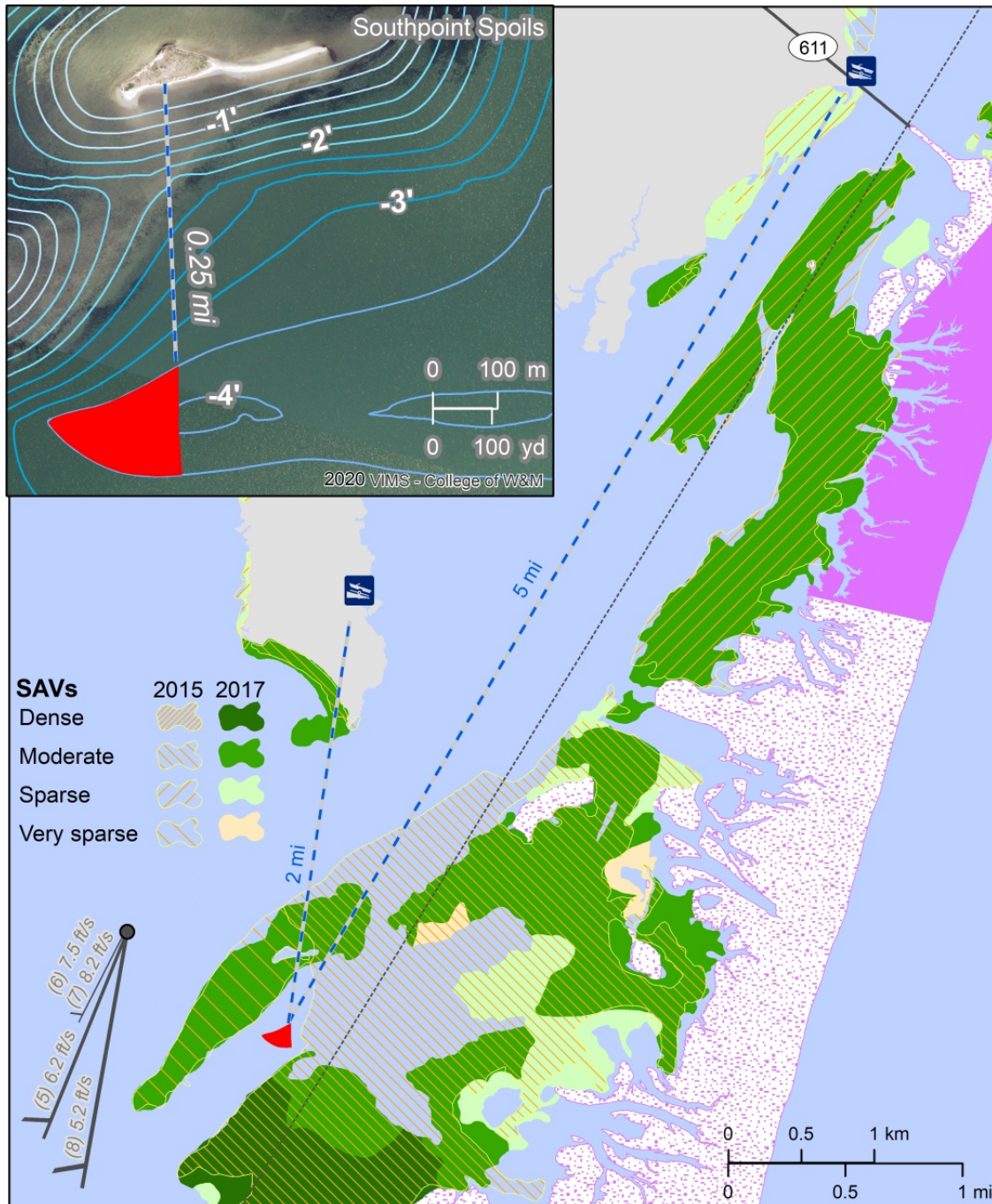
coast kids
ASSATEAGUE COASTAL TRUST

Coast Kids

Assateague Coastal Trust



Floating Island Site Chincoteague Bay, Md



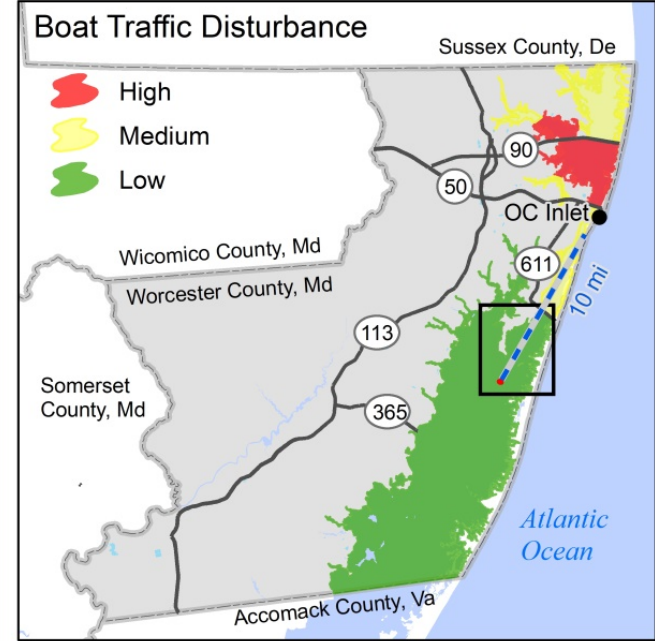
- Boat ramp
- National Seashore Jurisdiction
- Floating Island Site

Assateague Island Management

- MDDNR
- NPS

Average Wind Direction

(Month) Average Speed feet/second (ft/s)



Source: Md Dept. of Natural Resources, Coastal Bays Boater's Guide, Assateague Island National Seashore, NOAA Coastal Management.

Prepared: 8 March 2021

Nesting raft site:

- **Avoids mapped SAV beds.**
- **Area with low boat traffic set away from a navigation channel.**
- **Sheltered, shallow water site with low wave energy.**
- **Away from potential predators on chicks and eggs.**

We built it, did they come?





Wildlife & Heritage Service Information & Education Program



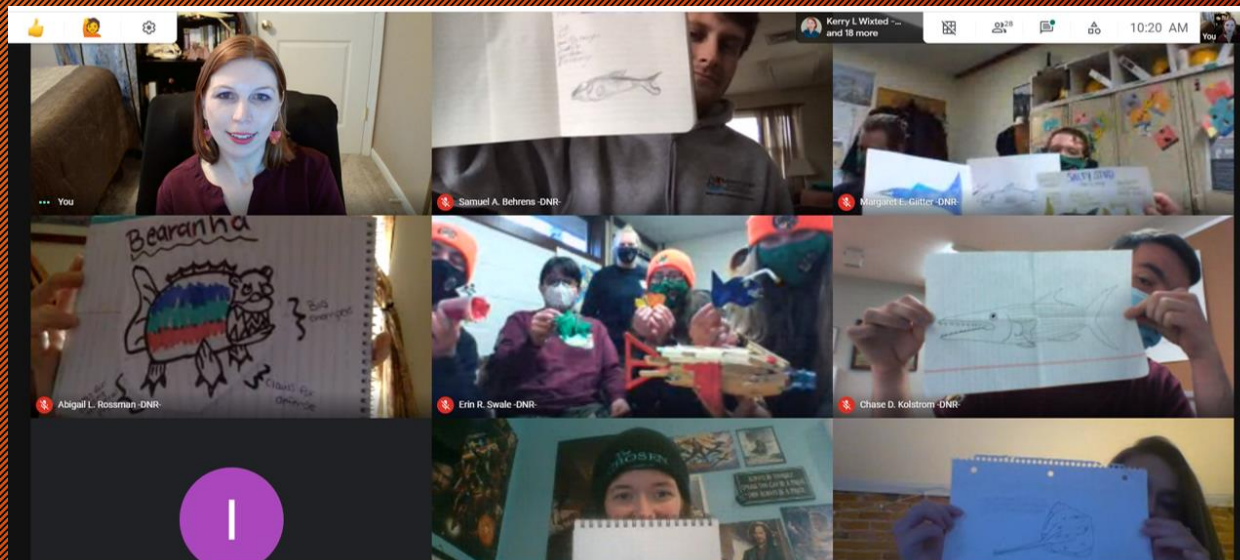
Who and what makes up the I & E Program?

- Outreach/Education Specialist - vacant
- Graphics/Design Specialist - Wade Henry
- R3 Coordinator - Chris Markin
- Videographer (seasonal) - vacant
- Program Manager - vacant

Wildlife Education Specialist

Professional Development

- 63 professional development workshops
 - reaching 945 participants.
- 31 WILD workshops for 434 participants



Master Naturalist

- Worked to encourage our current and former master naturalists.
- Plant camp-monthly virtual sessions on different aspects of botany.
- When it was safe to do so virtual lessons were paired with outdoor activities.



Wild Acres



- Three HabiChats to 9,500+ subscribers up from 6,500 in 2020
- 67 talks for 4,948 participants
 - Twice the amount of people over the previous year.



Photo by: Gene Groshon

120 Grams of Fury: The American Kestrel




CELEBRATE NATIONAL POLLINATOR WEEK

DID YOU KNOW?



USGS PWRC

It only takes 250 female blue orchard bees to pollinate an acre of apples vs. 20,000 honey bee foragers!



School Programs

- 11 virtual programs for 440 students.
- The most popular program was a virtual owl pellet dissection in which several groups were sent owl pellet dissection kits to dissect online while also learning about local owls and food webs.



Graphics and Design

Wade Henry

MARYLAND
Department of Natural Resources



Expires
7-31-19

Migratory Game Bird Stamp

Maryland's Archery Hunter Survey Final Report 2017-2018



Edited by
Randy Brown, Game Naturalist
Diana Eyles, Deer Project Leader
Bob Long, Upland Game Bird Project Leader
Harry Sokol, Game Mammal Services Leader

Jan 2018

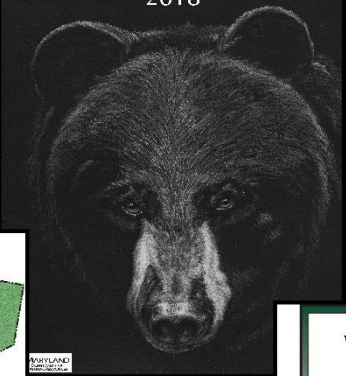


2018-2019



Maryland Black Bear Conservation Stamp

Bear Hunter's Guide To Hunting Black Bears In Maryland 2018



MARYLAND GUIDE TO
HUNTING & TRAPPING
2021-2022

Regular Duck Season is now divided into Eastern and Western Zones
Pages 7 & 44

Page 10
Deer Hunting with Straight-Washed Cartridges

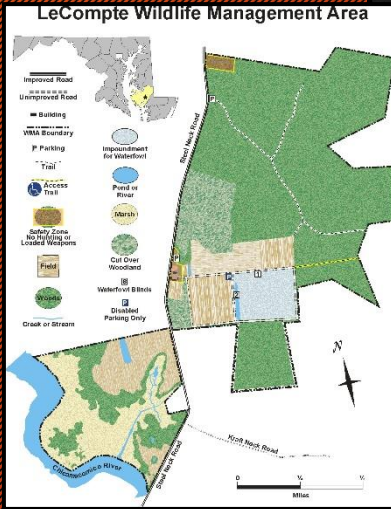
Page 33
Do-It-Yourself Stocked Pheasant Hunts available again this year.

MARYLAND ANNUAL DEER REPORT



2017-2018

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
WILDLIFE AND HERITAGE SERVICE



White-tailed Deer Education Trunk Teacher's Guide



MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
Wildlife & Heritage Service

I & E Program Manager

Outreach

- Social Media
 - On July 31, 2020, WHS had 32,513 followers on FB
 - As of July 31, 2021, WHS has 34,700 followers.
- News releases
 - WHS produced approximately 40 press releases this past year.
- Website updates
 - WHS Internet Content Managers worked with the DNR web team to make approximately 250 web page updates since August of last year.



Customer Service Calls and Emails

- WHS personnel have responded to well over 1000 customer service requests (email, phone, FB) this past year.



R3

Recruitment, Retention and
Reactivation

Chris Markin

Mentored Hunt Program

- First shot mentored deer hunt hosted 24 new hunters with mentors. The orientation and education took place virtually prior to the hunt.
- Patuxent Research Refuge hosted 9 new hunters during a new mentored hunt.
- The First Shot turkey hunt was cancelled due to covid.



Mentored Hunt Program

- 200 applicants from new hunters looking for a mentor.
- 23 hunters have signed up to be mentors
- We plan to push the program and build the mentor database as soon as we can safely move into full programming.

National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP)

- 244 schools/orgs participating
- The tournament was held virtually this year with 186 virtual archers.
- National effort within the US Army's JROTC programs to have every school with a JROTC program participating in NASP®.
- The 2022 MD State NASP® Tournament is scheduled for March 18 & 19, 2022.
- Increased involvement from WHS and development of new programs.



Stocked Pheasant Hunts

- November 21-22, 2020
- Twelve WMAs:
 - Mount Nebo (Garrett County)
 - Cunningham Swamp (Garrett County)
 - Warrior Mountain (Allegany County)
 - Belle Grove (Allegany County)
 - Indian Springs (Washington)
 - McKee-Beshers (Montgomery County)
 - Myrtle Grove (Charles County)
 - Chicamuxen (Charles County)
 - Old Bohemia (Cecil County)
 - Wellington (Somerset County)
 - Le Compte (Dorchester)
 - Maryland Marine Properties (Somerset)

Stocked Pheasant Hunts cnt'd

- Two state forests:
 - Savage River State Forest (Garrett County)
 - Green Ridge State Forest (Allegany County)
- Focused on apprentice and youth license holders, as well as lapsed hunters
- 1150 birds will be purchased and released
- 105 hunters participated last year
- Nine WMAs and two state forests participated last year

What's next?

- Fill program vacancies.
- Finalize our R3 strategic plan.
- Fully launch our mentor program.



Fox on Table by Zaphir Shamma

Questions?





Wildlife Advisory Commission
Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service
580 Taylor Avenue
Tawes State Office Building, E-1
Annapolis MD 21401-2352

August 12, 2021

Commissioners:

Since moving to Maryland in 1983, I have been immersed in the promotion of our state's opportunities for angling and hunting. My background information can be found online on my company's website. Today, I am making a request for consideration by the Commission.

Bucks-Bears-Stags, LLC (BBS) was created in 2017 in response to information relayed to several Measurers for the now inactive Maryland Trophy Deer Contest by its overseer. The message was that the MTDC would only be holding its contest approximately every three years because there were insufficient entries to maintain a yearly contest. The MTDC website and Facebook page disappeared, sponsors dropped their support shortly thereafter and several of the Measurers withdrew from the group.

Having personally interacted with MTDC over the course of two decades and having made at least three offers to publish a Maryland big game record book, I decided to form an organization that would be able to establish the records for Maryland whitetail bucks, black bears (never done before) and Sika deer stags.

After consulting with several former MTDC Measurers, a plan came together to create a new enterprise, Bucks-Bears-Stags. The main goal was to eventually publish an accurate, comprehensive and entertaining record book for Maryland's big game species.

The principal person responsible for the MTDC was invited to take a large role in the planning and execution of the record book. He declined the invitation and refused to furnish the MTDC records. At this point, we contacted the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service and asked if we could use the data supplied by MTDC to WHS for the publication of the annual Big Game Report. Since the Big Game Reports are public records, all we had to do was enter the DNR data from 1988 through 2018 into a structured database. Since there were few electronic versions, each entry had to be entered by hand – a daunting undertaking.

After the BBS Team of Official Measurers was established, BBS began its social media outreach and established its interactive website. From 2017 through 2020, the BBS Team measured close to 300 animals. In August of 2020, the first-ever record book was published. Its title is *"Maryland's Finest – The Records and the Legacy, First Edition"*. BBS is proud of our record book and would be proud to officially be recognized as Maryland's record-keeping enterprise.

That background information leads to today's request: Would Maryland's Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service recognize Bucks-Bears-Stags in its capacity as the official record-keeping entity for Maryland's big game records? We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

L. Allan Ellis,
Founder, Bucks-Bears-Stags