



Audubon IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Lower Delmarva

Northampton County

Total Size: 9,997 ha (24,693 acres)

Elevation: 0 – 19.5 m (0 – 64 ft)



IBA Criteria Met

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Source</i>
Species at Risk	Northern Bobwhite	Area is a population stronghold for this species. Available data and extent of habitat suggest the threshold is being met	Breeding	B. Watts, M. Wilson, and D. Bradshaw – Center for Conservation Biology Technical Report
Species at Risk	American Woodcock	1. >200 individuals on some surveys 2. High count of 570 in 1993	Winter	1. Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR transects 2. Christmas Bird Count data
Species at Risk	Chuck-will's-widow	Based on available data and extent of habitat, population likely exceeds threshold	Breeding	B. Watts - personal communication
Species at Risk	Brown-headed Nuthatch	Common, population likely well exceeds threshold based on available data and extent of habitat	Resident	B. Watts - personal communication
Species at Risk	Grasshopper Sparrow	Area is a population stronghold for this species throughout NE. Available data and extent of habitat suggest the threshold is being met	Breeding	B. Watts, M. Wilson, and D. Bradshaw – Center for Conservation Biology Technical Report
Species at Risk	Eastern Meadowlark	Based on available data and extent of habitat, population likely exceeds threshold	Breeding	B. Watts, M/ Wilson, and D. Bradshaw – Center for Conservation Biology Technical Report
Congregations - Migrant Landbirds	Passerines	~ 10 million annually	Migration	M. Watts and S. Mabey – Center for Conservation Biology Technical reports 1993 and 1994

Congregations -
Migrant Landbirds

Raptors

20-80,000 annually

Migration

1. 2002 Coastal
Virginia Wildlife
Observatory Field
Research Report
2. D. Whalen and
B. Watts 2002
Auk publication

Description

The Delmarva Peninsula separates the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay. The last 100 km of the peninsula form a narrow land mass averaging 10 km in width but narrowing toward the southern tip where it forms the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The Lower Delmarva IBA comprises the southwestern tip of the peninsula along the bayside. The landscape is highly dissected and dominated by agricultural fields. Forest tracts are generally small and isolated with mixed vegetation. The exceptions to this pattern are the forested corridors along the bayside and seaside margins. Canopy trees are dominated by loblolly pine, Virginia pine, red maple, and various oaks and hickories. Understory dominants are flowering dogwood, American holly, and black cherry.

Conservation and Management Units

A modest but strategic percentage of the Lower Delmarva IBA is owned and protected to meet various conservation objectives, including providing habitat for migrating birds. The Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge is strategically positioned at the tip of the peninsula and includes significant maritime forest and open habitats. Kiptopeke State Park is located along the Bay-side edge of the peninsula and includes the most significant stopover habitat for passerines known on the peninsula. The Department of Conservation and Recreation owns several key parcels that are wholly contained or overlap the site. These include Savage Neck State Natural Area Preserve (SNAP), William B. Trower SNAP, and Cape Charles Coastal Habitat SNAP. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' GATR tract of the Mockhorn Island WMA also overlaps with the IBA and The Nature Conservancy holds several parcels within it.

Birds

Due to its orientation and geographic position, the lower Delmarva Peninsula represents a significant bottleneck for birds migrating along the Atlantic Coast during the fall months and therefore supports a spectacular fall migration of southbound land birds. Large numbers of migrants that reach the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay in the early morning hours 'fall out' and utilize habitats near the southern tip of the



Banded Black-throated Blue Warbler

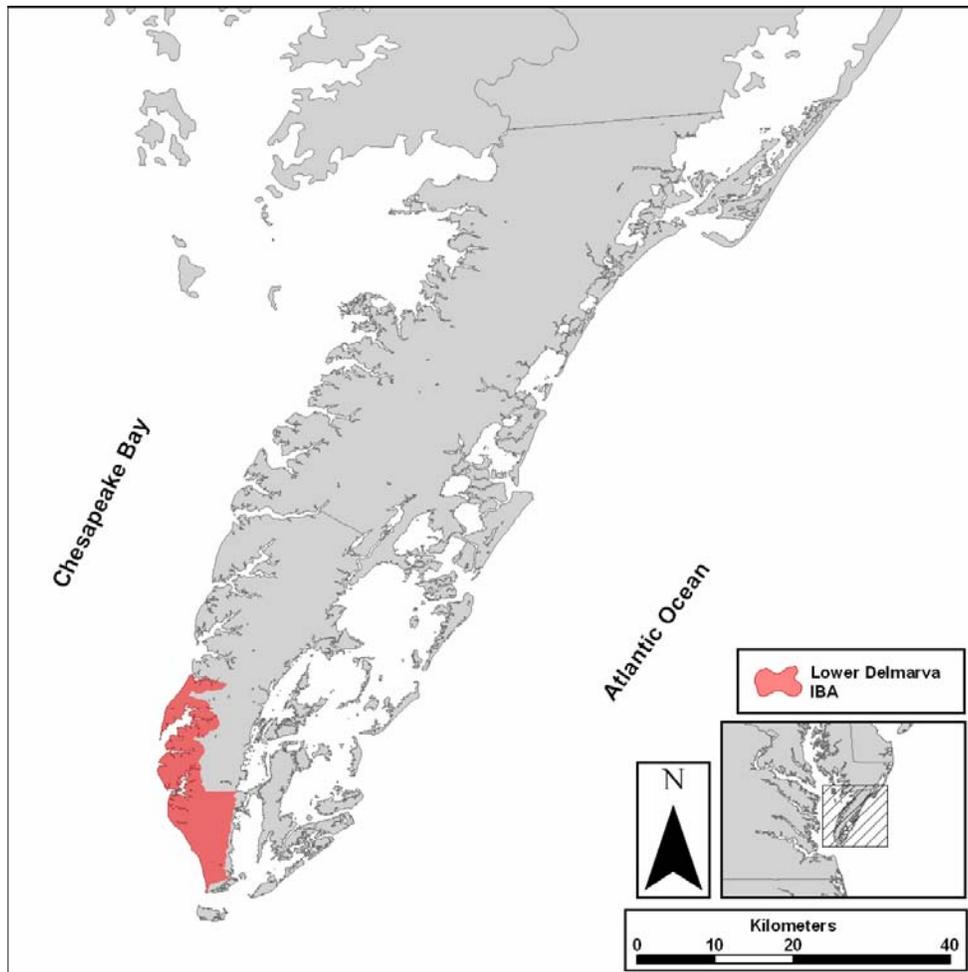
Photo by Bryan Watts

peninsula. The area is particularly important for passerines that breed in northeastern North America and winter in the Caribbean, but also important for temperate migrants that winter in the southeastern United States. Over 10 million neotropical and temperate migrating passerines and 80 thousand nocturnal and diurnal raptors are estimated to migrate through this area between August and December each year, including many species of conservation concern. The landscape mosaic of agricultural lands and woodlots provides important habitat for breeding and wintering species as well. Fallow fields support large populations of Eastern Meadowlarks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Field Sparrows, and Northern Bobwhites. The maritime pine forests that line the peninsula and the Chesapeake Bay support some of the highest breeding densities of Chuck-Will's-Widows in their range and likely support large populations of Brown-headed Nuthatches. This area is also an important winter trap for the American Woodcock.

Conservation and Threats

The single greatest threat to this area is the ongoing conversion of habitat to residential and commercial development. In the past decade, interest in the area from developers and potential homeowners has greatly increased, leading to an incredible rise in land valuations. Most of the privately owned land along the bayside has been subdivided for development for a period of 15 years or more. Much of the inland parcels have been subdivided in more recent years. Recent investments in residential development suggest that the area could be experiencing increased habitat loss. Acquisition of parcels demonstrated to be important to migrants is a continuing goal of a consortium of land-based agencies and conservation organizations. Other significant threats include various factors that contribute to forest understory loss such as deer overpopulation, clearing for land sale or development, and overstocked pine plantations that lead to canopy closure.

Lower Delmarva IBA Map

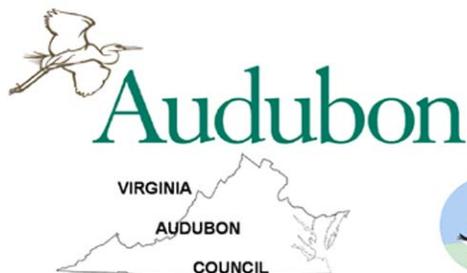


For more information about this and other IBAs in Virginia please visit our website at:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/virginia/>

Or contact Mary Elfner, the Virginia IBA Coordinator, at:

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Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM