



# *ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS*

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## ***KIPTOPEKE STATE PARK EXPANSION BECOMES SONGBIRD HABITAT***

**RICHMOND, VA.** – More than 1,800 native trees and shrubs were planted this month a few miles north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel to help feed and shelter the 6-7 million migratory songbirds that use the southern tip of the Eastern Shore as a rest stop during their fall migration.

The planting occurred along the west side of Route 13 on a 26 acre expansion of Kiptopeke State Park that was acquired in December 2009 with \$446,000 from the [Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program](#) and \$200,000 from singer/songwriter James Taylor and his wife Kim to support migratory songbirds.

The new planting includes fruit-producing shrubs such as Southern wax myrtle and Northern bayberry that serve as food and shelter for the birds. Midstory trees such as Persimmon, American holly and Sassafras will also provide fruits. The deciduous hardwood trees such as Mockernut hickory, American beech, and oaks will eventually grow up among the shrubs and develop a canopy, producing leaf litter and insects for the birds.

“This newly planted parcel is the last piece of a puzzle, connecting existing forest habitat areas of Kiptopeke State Park to the north, south and east and providing migratory songbirds a contiguous stretch of food and shelter,” said David K. Paylor, director of the Department of Environmental Quality, lead coordinating agency for the networked Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program.

The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at DEQ, along with the program’s member agencies, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, work with The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife as part of the [Southern Tip Partnership](#). Together they protect and manage more than 24,000 acres on Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program provided \$35,000 in funding to plant the newly acquired site at Kiptopeke with native grasses, canopy trees, and understory shrubs to restore food-rich, wooded stopover habitat. The grant will also fund trails connecting to other parts of Kiptopeke State Park, a [Plant ES Natives campaign](#) demonstration garden, wildlife observation blinds, and interpretive signage that tells the story of songbird migration.

Migratory songbirds play important ecological and economic roles for the Eastern Shore. They consume insects and provide a unique ecotourism opportunity. They stop on the Eastern Shore during the fall for food and shelter during their migration to Central and South America.

Research has documented the southern tip of the Eastern Shore as a hemispherically important stopover habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds. As millions of birds flying south in the fall are funneled into the tip of the Shore's long peninsula, they must find food and cover quickly. The protection and management of this habitat provides the berries, insects and protection from predators needed by the birds to make the trip to the tropics each year.

To learn more about this project contact Laura McKay, program manager for the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at (804) 698-4323, [Laura.McKay@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:Laura.McKay@deq.virginia.gov).

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