

Black Marsh Natural Area, **Baltimore County**



Dave Brinker/Maryland DNR



The marsh, once a popular vacation spot, is now in excellent condition.

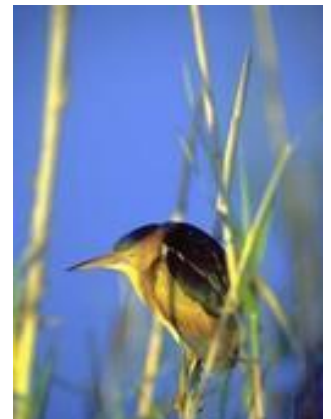
Black Marsh Natural Area is amazingly wild and natural despite its close proximity to the heavily developed areas of Baltimore County.

Key Elements

- Least bittern
- Bald eagles
- Rattlesnake-master
- Tickseed sunflowers

The area boasts over six miles of shoreline, high quality tidal and non-tidal wetland, and upland forest bordering the Chesapeake Bay, Back River, and Shallow Creek. The relatively undisturbed tidal freshwater and brackish wetland is uncommon in the northern part of the Chesapeake Bay. Also, the large bayside marsh, Black Marsh, is considered to be one of the finest examples of a tidal marsh on the upper Chesapeake.

A variety of wetland wildlife can be found here, including several state-listed plant species such as false foxglove (*Agalinis fasciculata*), tall swamp marigold (*Bidens coronata*), and justice weed (*Eupatorium leucolepis*). Several rare, threatened or endangered birds also live at Black Marsh, including black rail, swamp sparrow and bald eagle. The rare and elusive least bittern has been found breeding in the marshes, along with Virginia rails. The mature upland and riparian forests provide habitat for at least five species of sensitive forest interior birds, such as Louisiana waterthrush. The marsh is also an important source of food and shelter for numerous fish species. The area contains a variety of wetland grasses, marsh-loving shrubs, and flowers like the unusual rattlesnake-master and the attractive tickseed sunflower. The land side of the marsh is surrounded by a mature forest.



Allan J. Sander

The least bittern is a rare bird that has been sighted at Black Marsh.

Visiting

- Facilities, visitors center, and handicap area available
- Wading beach, fishing pier, hiking trails, and scenic overlooks available
- Open 8am to sunset
- Small state park fee is required

City Escape

The early 20th century beaches of Black Marsh were attractive getaways for Baltimore City residents looking to escape city life and heat. For the cost of a trolley ride, young and old alike could seek respite from the city's oppressive summer heat at the bathing beach, large picnic area and amusement attractions.

However, in 1947 the amusement park closed its gates forever, and part of the old trolley trail now provides excellent access to watch winter waterfowl congregate.

An Invasive Reed

One of the greatest threats to this marsh system is the invasive common reed (*Phragmites australis*), a clonal grass that reproduces vegetatively. In this type of reproduction, genetically identical new growth detaches and develops from the parent plant without the need for pollination; thus, common reed can quickly crowd out native plant species that benefit wildlife.



Chris Helzer/TNC

Rattlesnake master is a unique plant that grows among the marsh grasses.

Black Marsh Natural Area was established by the Conservancy and Baltimore County in 1987. It is comprised of 1,300 acres on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. The State of Maryland manages a portion of the property as a Sensitive Management Area, allowing only passive, recreational uses such as hiking, birdwatching, and nature study. It is an integral part of North Point State Park, and is managed by the Maryland Park Service. There is also an audio tour available to enhance a visit to the preserve.

Directions (GPS Coordinates: 39°13'14.0"N 76°25'50.0"W)

From North Baltimore: Travel I-695 (Baltimore Beltway) south towards Essex/Key Bridge. Take Exit 42 and bear right (south) onto MD 151 (North Point Boulevard). At the first light, turn left onto MD 158 (Bethlehem Boulevard), which bends right in 0.1 mile and becomes MD 20 (North Point Road). Continue about 2 miles, staying left at the fork, to North Point State Park on the left.

From South Baltimore: Travel I-695 (Baltimore Beltway) north towards Glen Burnie/Key Bridge. Cross the Key Bridge and take Exit 43. At the first (blinking) light, turn left (east) onto MD 158 (Bethlehem Boulevard). Continue about 1 mile and go straight across MD 151 (North Point Boulevard). In 0.1 mile the road bends right and becomes MD 20 (North Point Road). Continue about 2 miles, staying left at the fork, to North Point State Park on the left.

Watch Out For!

- Mosquitoes
- Ticks and biting insects
- Poison ivy

Contact

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