

# Kent Island Water Trails

## Explore Maryland's Eastern Shore

Established in 1706, and named after the reigning English monarch, Queen Anne's County has a long and rich history. From its early days as a thriving center of tobacco heritage to its current status as a gateway to the Eastern Shore, Queen Anne's County has played an important role in Maryland and national history.

### The Chesapeake Bay Landscape



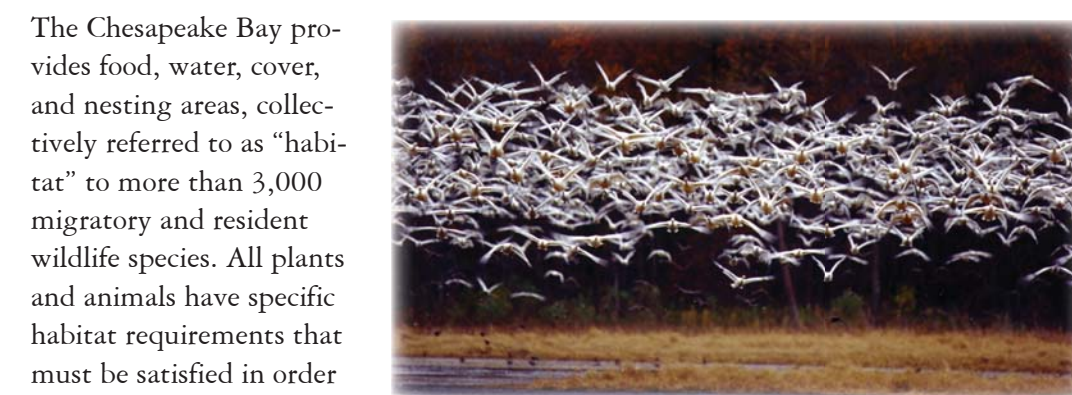
View of the Bay Bridge at sunset

The Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States, is approximately 200 miles long, extending from Havre de Grace, Maryland, to Norfolk, Virginia. It varies in width from about 3.4 miles near Aberdeen, Maryland, to 35 miles at its widest point near the mouth of the Potomac River. Including its tidal tributaries, the Bay has approximately 11,684 miles of shoreline. Kent Island is situated on the Bay's eastern shore approximately midway between its headwaters and confluence with the Atlantic Ocean.

The Chesapeake Bay is a place of evolving geology, ecology, economy, and culture. The rising waters from the melting glaciers of the Pleistocene age reached the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay about 10,000 years ago. Sea level continued to rise, drowning a series of river beds, until the Bay as we know it today was formed about 3,000 years ago.

The Chesapeake Bay is part of a delicate and complex ecosystem. This ecosystem consists of the Bay, its tributaries, and the living resources it supports. The Bay receives about half of its water volume from the Atlantic Ocean, and the remainder from an enormous 64,000 square mile drainage basin or watershed. The watershed includes portions of six states: New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, as well as the District of Columbia.

### Wildlife Habitat



Snow Geese in flight

The Chesapeake Bay provides food, water, cover, and nesting areas, collectively referred to as "habitat" to more than 3,000 migratory and resident wildlife species. All plants and animals have specific habitat requirements that must be satisfied in order to survive and thrive. Food, temperature, water, salinity, nutrients, substrate, light, oxygen and shelter requirements vary with each species. These physical and chemical variables largely determine which species can be supported by a particular habitat.

Within every habitat, communities of organisms exist in close relationship to each other. Communities may be as small as oyster bars or as large as the entire Bay. The relationship among species forms a complex, inter-connected web. Some organisms produce food, others serve as prey. Some communities such as underwater Bay grasses provide both food and cover. In addition, Bay grasses help remove nutrients and sediment pollution from the Bay's waters, and help reduce the impacts of wave energy and erosion.

### Birds

Hundreds of species of birds reside in the Chesapeake Bay region including waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, raptors, and song birds. Some live here year-round, while others are migratory, visiting only during certain seasons. For example, most waterfowl are migratory, although some Canada geese, as well as the invasive mute swan, have taken up full-time residence around the Bay. The Bay is also a major nesting area for the once threatened bald eagle. Some bald eagles live on the Bay year-round, while others only reside here during winter. The great blue heron

Bald Eagle

and the black-crowned night heron are the only two resident wading birds in the Bay watershed; egrets and other herons migrate south for the winter. Ospreys visit the Bay from spring through summer to breed and then migrate south for the winter.



Canada Geese in the marsh

Just east of Kent Island is the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, a 500 acre sanctuary that features paths around six waterfowl ponds, each representing a different wetland habitat. The Center is an excellent place to see the Chesapeake's wintering population of waterfowl including: canvasback, American black duck, shoveler, ruddy duck, redhead, Canada goose and tundra swan. Shorebirds make a strong showing in May and late summer, when hundreds can be seen. Over 200 species of birds have been recorded, and a documented list is available in the visitor center. For more information see: [www.bayrestoration.org](http://www.bayrestoration.org).

### Fisheries

The Chesapeake Bay is one of the most fertile estuaries in the nation and it is fed by nearly 50 rivers and hundreds of smaller creeks, streams, and marshes. About 350 species of fish are known to live in the Bay, including: resident fish, which live in the Bay year-round; and migratory fish which move into the Bay from the ocean or freshwater tributaries during various times of the year to feed, find shelter, or spawn. The Bay's freshwater tributaries support striped bass, white and yellow perch, herring, and shad. During the winter months, numerous marine species enter the Bay to feed on its rich food supply including, the bluefish, weakfish, croaker, menhaden, flounder, and spot.



Bluefish (Pomatomus saltator)

For centuries, the wide diversity of fish species in the Bay has supported a robust commercial and recreational fishing industry providing enjoyment for many, and enriching local economies. On an average summer weekend, over 100,000 recreational fisherman can be seen plying the Bay's waters. In addition to sport fishing, the diverse aquatic life in the Bay provides a livelihood for watermen, seafood processors, packers, and laborers. On average, the retail value of the Bay's seafood harvest reaches into the hundreds of millions of dollars per year.



Workboats at the Kent Narrows

### History and Heritage

Chesapeake Bay is a translation of the Powhatan Indian word "chesepeoc" which means "Great Shellfish Bay." At the time of the first European settlement, the tidewater area was inhabited by an estimated 13,000 to 14,000 Powhatan Indians.

The first European to enter the Chesapeake Bay region was Spanish explorer Vicente Gonzalez in 1561. Following several failed settlement attempts, the Spanish left the area in 1571, never to return. In 1605, the French started a colony at Port Royal (now Annapolis, Maryland), and in 1607, the British established the Jamestown settlement on the banks of the James River. Sailing from Jamestown in 1608, Captain John Smith was the first European to thoroughly explore and map the Chesapeake Bay.

Since those early explorations, the Chesapeake Bay has enjoyed a varied maritime history. Bay waters have been traveled by all manner of ships throughout the ages, often specifically designed or modified to sail the Chesapeake's shallow waters. Navigation in these shallow waters has been aided by a series of lighthouses, lightships, towers, and screw piles. Bloody Point Light can still be seen just off the southern tip of Kent Island.

### Kent Island

In August 1631, William Claiborne landed on Kent Island and established a trading post and commerce center - the first English settlement in Maryland. Claiborne named the settlement after his English homeland, the County of Kent not knowing that King Charles I of England would soon grant this same land to Lord Baltimore.

When Leonard Calvert, the Governor of Maryland, arrived in America to claim the colony's territory, Claiborne refused to leave or to allow his land to become part of Maryland. Claiborne's supporters fought briefly with Calvert's forces but could not defeat them. Claiborne went to England to argue his case before the king, and while he was gone, Maryland gained control of Kent Island.

### Kent Narrows

Embraced by the Chester River on the north and the Eastern Bay on the south, the Kent Narrows channel separates Kent Island from the mainland. For generations, Kent Narrows was a bustling center of commercial seafood processing, with as many as twelve packing houses operating simultaneously, and hundreds of watermen bringing the catch to the docks. Today, the tradition continues and fresh seafood is featured on the menu at unique dining establishments in the area. Marine businesses, dock bars, and events make "The Narrows" a popular destination for pleasure boaters and attracts visitors from nearby Annapolis, Baltimore, and Washington D.C.



An aerial view of the Kent Narrows at U.S. Route 50/301

### Kent Island Today - A Growing Bayside Community

Over the past decade, Kent Island has experienced tremendous growth, due in part, to an increase in real estate values across the Bay in Anne Arundel County, and in the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan areas. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of housing units on Kent Island increased 30% from 5,238 to 6,786 units. Stevensville, the largest town on Kent Island, offers a variety of commercial services, and is home to several historic structures, including the restored Stevensville Train Depot and Christ Church, home to Maryland's oldest congregation which was founded in 1631. Additional information is available from the county visitor's center at 425 Piney Narrows Road or online at: [www.discoverqueenannes.com](http://www.discoverqueenannes.com).



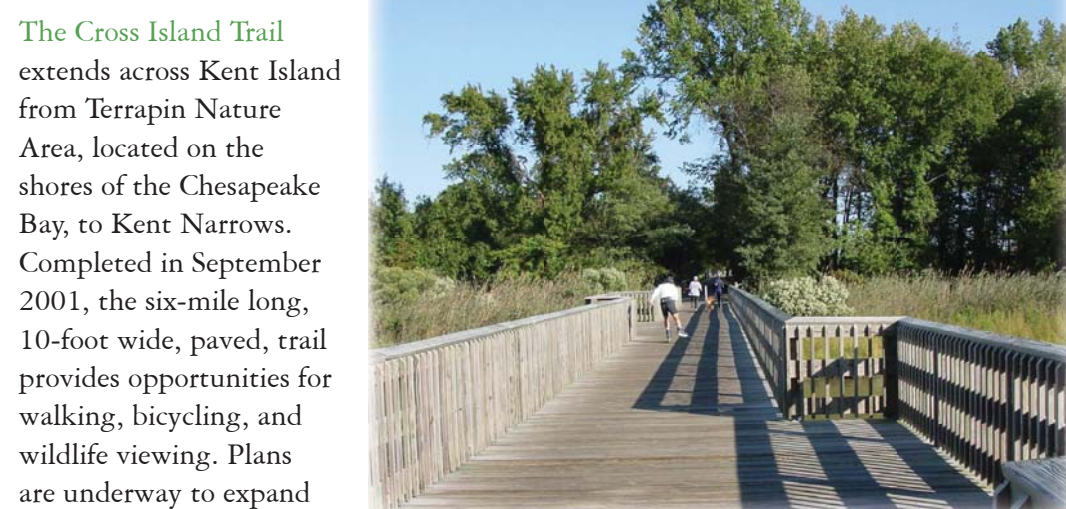
Queen Anne's Lace

### Managing Growth and Protecting the Bay's Resources

The increase in new residents provides an opportunity, as well as a challenge, to ensure that new development is designed and constructed in a manner that protects the island's critical natural and historic assets. In an attempt to conserve its unique character and valuable resources, Queen Anne's County has adopted policies that target new land development to Growth Areas, and protects resources such as streams, non-tidal wetlands, and waterfront areas. Preserved land in the county plays a critical role in Maryland's statewide GreenPrint initiative, announced by the Governor in December 2008, to strategically target and protect the most ecologically valuable areas in Maryland. For more information visit: [www.green.maryland.gov](http://www.green.maryland.gov)

### Trails - Supporting Tourism and Wellness

In addition, Queen Anne's County is working to develop a county-wide trail system, providing alternative transportation and recreation linkages for area residents. It is intended that the growing system of bikeways, greenways, water trails and water access provide an avenue for residents and visitors to explore the island's natural and cultural heritage and attractions.



The Cross Island Trail is popular with Kent Island residents and also attracts visitors from throughout the area.



Biking along the Kent Island South Trail

The Kent Island South Trail: is a 6-mile paved trail that parallels Route 8 from Matapeake Park to Romancoke Pier, Phase II of the trail, currently in the planning phase, will connect Matapeake Park to the park-and-ride at Route 50 and Route 8.

### Paddling and Boating Safety Tips

Although there are many streams and coves on Kent Island that are suitable for beginners, there are also areas of open water that are subject to tidal influence, high winds and strong currents. Be prepared! Review these guidelines before getting on the water.

• Wear a properly-fitted, U.S. Coast Guard approved, lifejacket while on the water. (See Maryland Boating Regulations below)

• Boating safety increases with numbers. Boat with others and carry a spare paddle.

• Know your route and any potential hazards along it. Review maps, navigation aids, and weather conditions or marine forecasts before launching. Be aware of obstacles you may encounter along the trails such as trees or sandbars.

• Dress appropriately for weather or water conditions, including air and water temperature. Wear protective footwear if you plan to wade.

• Never paddle farther from shore than you are prepared to swim and stay at least 100 yards away from all moving vessels, piers and other restricted areas. Beware of stinging sea nettles and jellyfish in the water throughout the summer.

• Carry a supply of food and water adequate for the length of your trip. Stay well-hydrated and protected from the sun year-round to minimize the danger of dehydration and heat exhaustion.

• Keep your weight centered and as low as possible at all times, especially when entering and exiting a boat. When paddling in wind, stay close to the shoreline and paddle on the lee-side.

• If your boat flips over, remain calm. Hold onto your paddles and the boat if possible. Try to reach a calm, shallow spot or the shoreline, then empty the boat and re-enter.

• Be alert to possible weather changes. Squalls and thunderstorms are common during the warm months, usually accompanied by temperature drops, increased winds and dark clouds. Get off the water immediately if you see lightning.

### Maryland Boating and Fishing Regulations

**Personal Flotation Devices:** Boats propelled by oars or paddles are required to carry one PFD of either Type I, II, III, or V, for each person on board, regardless of length. All motorized craft 16 - 65 feet must carry a Type I, II, III, or V, for each person on board, plus one extra Type IV. Children under age 13 must wear a US Coast Guard approved PFD at all times in any boat under 21 feet. (MD State Law).

**Boat Registration:** All boats, whether commercial or recreational, must be registered in Maryland if it is equipped with any kind of primary or auxiliary mechanical propulsion; not currently registered with the U.S. Coast Guard (documented); and is being used principally in Maryland. Registering your vessel in Maryland involves applying for a Certificate of Title as well as a registration. For more information visit [www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/registration/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/registration/)



Kent Narrows is a popular spot for fishing.

**Fishing Licenses:** A Tidal Fishing License is required for both residents and non-residents to fish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Visit [www.dnr.state.md.us/service/fishinfo.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/service/fishinfo.asp) to get more information on fees and how to obtain a license. Licenses for Maryland residents and non-residents allow fishing from January 1 through December 31. A 5-day license can also be purchased for a lesser charge.

### Leave No Trace

Please practice the following stewardship principles of Leave No Trace:

#### 1) Plan Ahead and Prepare.

- Know your route and the limitations of yourself and your group.
- Carry the proper equipment and clothing.
- Notify someone of the time you intend to return.

#### 2) Stay in Designated Areas.

- Keep to designated trails and public areas.
- Keep groups small and avoid trampling plants.
- Protect wildlife and your food - store rations securely.
- Leave recreation areas and picnic sites cleaner than you found them.

#### 3) Properly Dispose of All Waste.

- Clean fish at designated areas.
- Pick up litter and dispose of all waste in proper receptacles.

#### 4) Leave What You Find and Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

- Respect our natural and cultural heritage - leave all items as you found them.
- Keep noise to a minimum - enjoy the music of nature.
- Respect private property and the privacy of others.

For more information on Leave No Trace ethics visit [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org), call 1-800-332-4100, or contact your local resource managers for additional guidance.

### Wildlife Viewing Ethics

#### 1) Act responsibly.

Stay clear of nests, dens and rookeries. Do not touch or feed wild animals. Do not allow pets to interfere with wild animals.

#### 2) Avoid getting too close.

View wild birds and other animals from an appropriate distance. If animals change their behavior, appear nervous, keep looking at you with head up and ears pointing toward you, or if the animal doesn't resume its normal activity, then you are too close.

#### 3) Make your observation brief, then move on.

If you are looking at baby birds in a nest, fish in a pond, etc., remember that they can't leave and that you are interrupting normal behavior.

#### 4) Don't chase an animal.

Don't chase an animal trying to get better glimpse or photo. Don't follow animals or behave in any way that might be seen as "harassment." And don't allow your pets do it either.

#### 5) Move quietly and slowly. Use a blind if one has been provided.

Blinds, or hiding places for viewers, are sometimes built at popular viewing sites so that the movement of people does not distract the wildlife. Loud noises, sudden movements or an unannounced approach startle animals.

#### 6) Do not use calls or whistles, or try to rouse animals in any way.

This can interrupt breeding cycles, drive birds from their territories, or make animals "call shy" so they don't respond to the real thing.

#### 7) Divide large groups of people into small groups.

Small groups of people are less disturbing, usually talk more quietly, and tend to act in a more responsible way than big groups do.



## For More Information

Queen Anne's County Department of Parks and Recreation  
PO. Box 37, 1945 4-H Park Road  
Centreville, MD 21617  
phone: 410-758-0835 or 410-778-4430  
email: [parksnus@quc.org](mailto:parksnus@quc.org) or visit [www.parksnus.org/](http://www.parksnus.org/)



Maryland Department of Natural Resources Boating Services Unit

The Boating Facilities and Access Planning Division of DNR's Boating Services Unit coordinates the creation of a statewide system of public water access sites and water trails. The Division also provides technical, planning and design assistance to local governments and other partners. For more info visit [www.dnr.state.md.us/boating](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/boating)



### In Case of Emergency

In case of emergency, contact the Sheriff's Department Dispatch at (410) 758-0770 or 911 and specify that you are in Queen Anne's County, Maryland or call the Maryland Natural Resource Police at 410-260-8888



Martin O'Malley, Governor  
Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor  
John R. Griffin, Secretary MD DNR

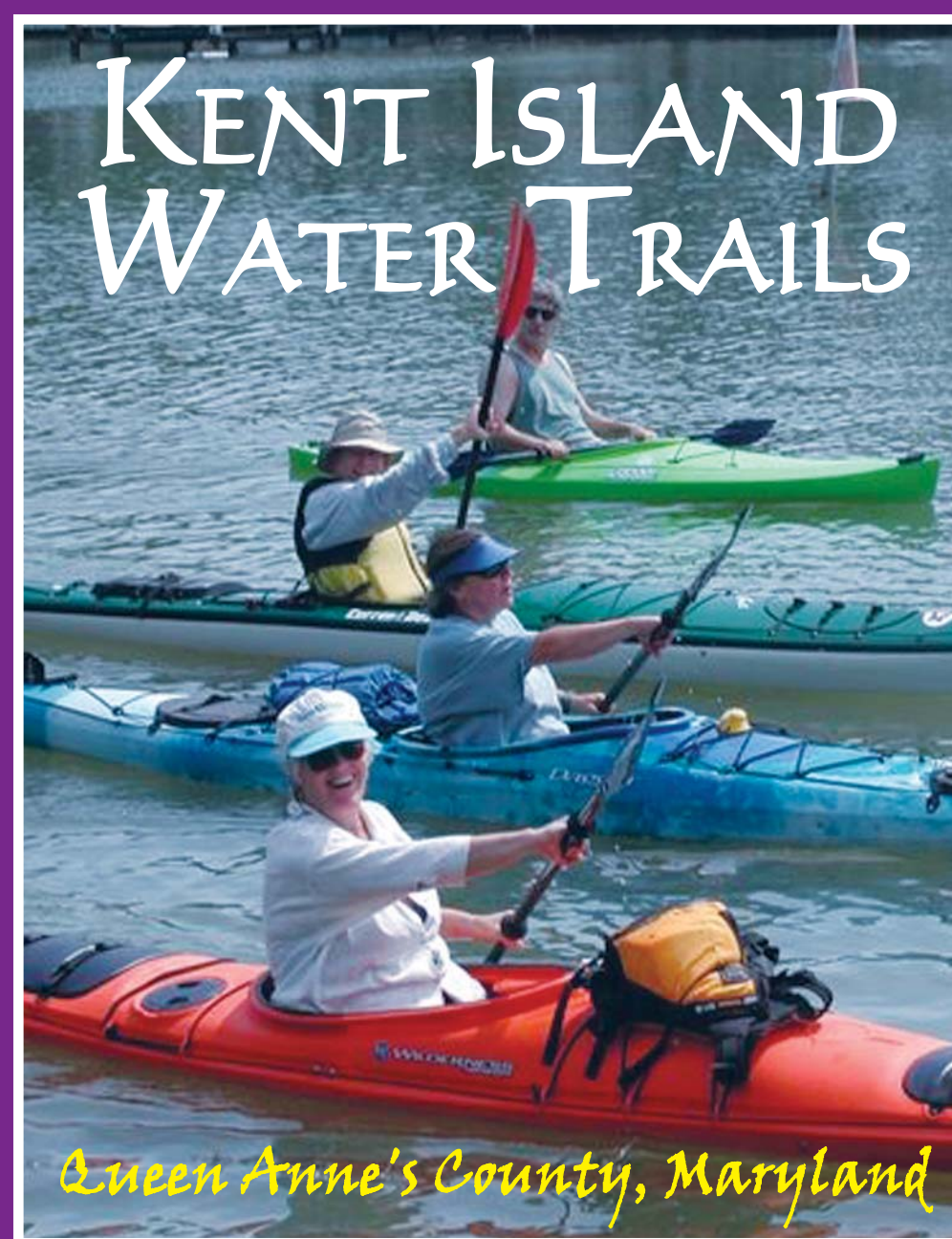
The facilities and services of the Department of Natural Resources are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin or physical or mental disability.

Call toll free in Maryland, 1-877-620-8DNR ext. 8780. TTY users call via the Maryland Relay. Accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. Seven days advance notice is required.



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