



Audubon MARYLAND-DC

Important Bird Areas

Chapman State Park IBA

Date of site account: May 2016

County: Charles County

Status: Recognized

Area: 828 acres (335 ha)

Priority: State

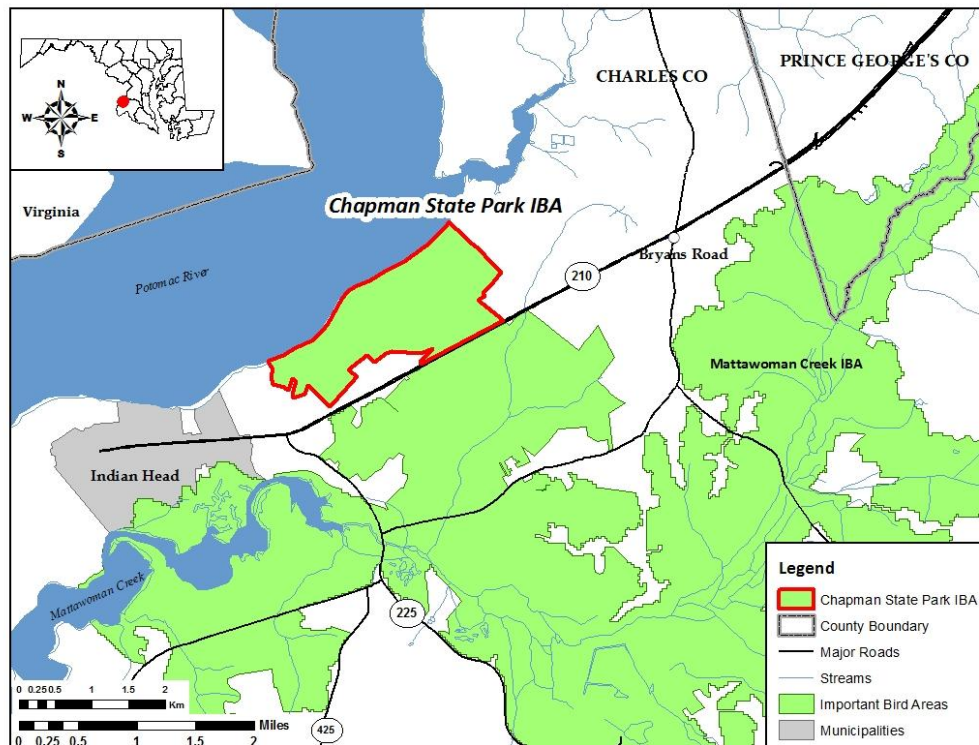


Wood Thrush

Photo: Bill Hubick

Site Description

Chapman State Park covers 828 acres of mostly forested land north of Highway 210 between the towns of Indian Head and Bryan's Road in Charles County. Most of the park is in the Potomac River watershed and includes two miles of shoreline along the river. The site is 97% forested. Upland oak-hickory forest is the dominant forest cover, and smaller areas of mixed hardwood-conifer forest and forested wetland are also present. Habitats include a rare shell-marl forest rich in calcium-loving plants. The park is owned and managed by the Maryland Park Service, a division of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. It was preserved in 1998 by the State of Maryland's Program Open Space (POS) and The Conservation Fund, following a spirited campaign by local activists to save the site from commercial and residential development. Chapman State Park IBA was dedicated at a ceremony on June 7, 2009.



Birds

Chapman State Park IBA is a site of statewide importance for bird conservation and was identified as an IBA in 2004. The site supports a diverse community of forest birds. Breeding season surveys carried out by Southern Maryland Audubon Society in 1999-2001 found 18 species of Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS), including four species on the Audubon WatchList (Yellow category): Wood Thrush, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler. Two of these species (Wood Thrush and Worm-eating Warbler) are likely present in significant numbers.



Qualifying IBA Criteria¹: Category MD-DC 1 (D1), Category MD-DC 2 (D3)

IBA Criterion	Species	Data	Season
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Wood Thrush	46 individuals observed ²	<i>Breeding</i>
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Worm-eating Warbler	8 individuals observed ²	<i>Breeding</i>
Category 2: <i>Species assemblage</i>	Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS): Barred Owl, Wood Thrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow throated Vireo, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Scarlet Tanager.	18 FIDS breeding regularly out of 24 in Coastal Plain ³	<i>Breeding</i>

1. Audubon Maryland-DC. 2011. Important Bird Areas Program criteria for site selection. Available online: <http://md.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-2>.
2. Wilmot, G. 2001. Forest bird breeding densities in Chapman's Forest: Results from the 1999, 2000 and 2001 studies. Unpublished report.
3. Ellison, W.G., editor. 2010. Second atlas of the breeding birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia. China: Johns Hopkins University Press. 494 p.

Conservation Status and Management

Chapman State Park IBA has been protected as public land and managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources since 1998 with the goals of maintaining the site's biological diversity and historical interest and providing recreational opportunities for visitors. The majority of the State Park was designated as State Wildland in 2014--a designation that preserves the site's wild and natural character and prohibits the construction of permanent roads and most buildings. In 2015, 1,353 acres of the formerly 2,181-acre park south of MD210 was transferred to the Mattawoman Natural Environment Area. Hunting is allowed in some areas of the park.

Threats and Conservation

Prior to 1998, the main threat to this area was from commercial and residential development. Now that the area is protected as a State Park and much of it designated as State Wildland the natural habitats of the IBA are relatively secure from management incompatible with bird conservation.

Current threats to the birds and habitats of Chapman State Park include invasive plant species and over-browsing by white-tailed deer that degrades forest habitat by denuding the shrub layer and ground flora. Some of the lands surrounding the park are vulnerable to development. These include inappropriately zoned land on its western flank and a forested tract on the park's eastern boundary, which is owned by Charles County and is currently zoned for industrial development as a science and technology park. Such development would adversely impact the ecological integrity of the State Park by exposing interior forest to ecological edge effects, such as increased disturbance, pollution, and predator numbers.

There is a need for bird population monitoring in this IBA in order to track bird population trends over time and assist with forest management.

Public Access and More Information

Chapman State Park is open to the public and has a network of trails that are ideal for birdwatching. For more information on Chapman State Park, visit the Maryland DNR website at: <http://dnr2.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/southern/chapman.aspx>

The Friends of Chapman State Park, Inc. helps to maintain and operate the park in partnership with Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Volunteer opportunities can be found at: <http://www.friendsofchapmansp.org/index.php/chapman-state-park>

For more information about this and other Important Bird Areas, visit Audubon Maryland-DC online at: <http://md.audubon.org/conservation/important-bird-areas>

This IBA site account was produced with a generous grant from Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust.

