



Audubon MARYLAND-DC

Important Bird Areas

Parkers Creek IBA

Date of Site Account: May 2016

County: Calvert County

Status: Recognized

Area: 6,324 acres (2,559 hectares)

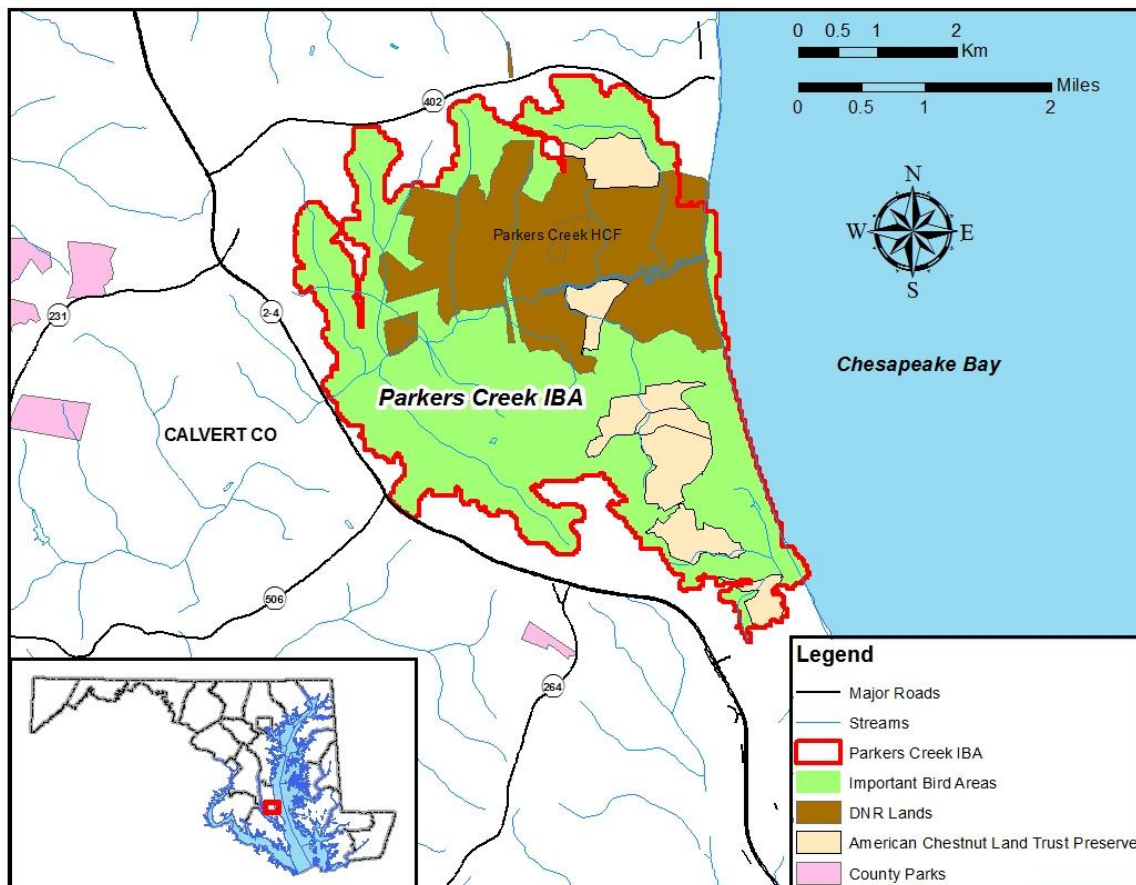
Priority: State

Site Description:

Parkers Creek watershed is the last remaining watershed on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay that is almost entirely undeveloped. The watershed contains a diverse mosaic of habitats including forested uplands, forested wetlands, mesic stream valleys, tidal freshwater and saltmarsh wetlands, barrier and pocket beaches, and fossil-bearing seacliffs. There are no buildings within one half mile of the creek proper. Despite its location less than one hour's drive from Washington DC, 5,594 acres of the watershed's 7,321 acres are still forested, providing significant habitat for forest interior dwelling birds. The marsh, creek, and adjacent bay support many waterfowl. The exceptional diversity of the watershed provides habitat for a variety of migratory birds. Parkers Creek watershed is the largest and most diverse relatively undisturbed multi-ecosystem left on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay.



Kentucky Warbler



Birds:

Parkers Creek IBA is a site of statewide importance for bird conservation. It was identified as an IBA in 2006. Data from a series of bird survey transects walked in 1999 and 2004 demonstrate that the site supports a diverse assemblage of Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS), with 18 out of 24 potentially occurring species breeding regularly. Two declining at-risk bird species on the Audubon/American Bird Conservancy Watchlist (Wood Thrush and Kentucky Warbler: category Yellow) breed here in significant numbers. The forest habitat at Parkers Creek has an unusually dense shrub layer because of the highly effective management of deer populations, and this is reflected by the relatively high numbers of Kentucky Warbler and Hooded Warbler, both of which depend upon the shrub layer, and which have declined dramatically in Maryland in recent decades due to the explosion of deer populations.

Table 1. Qualifying IBA Criteria¹:

IBA Criterion	Species	Data	Season
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Wood Thrush	103 individuals observed ²	Breeding
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Kentucky Warbler	14 individuals observed ²	Breeding
Category 2: <i>Species assemblage</i>	Forest Dwelling Interior Species FIDS: Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Whip-poor-will, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Summer Tanager.	18 FIDS breed regularly out of 24 potentially regular in Coastal Plain	Breeding

1. Audubon Maryland-DC. 2011. Important Bird Areas Program criteria for site selection. Available online: <http://md.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-2>.
2. Data collected by Leslie Starr 1999, unpublished

Conservation and Management Units

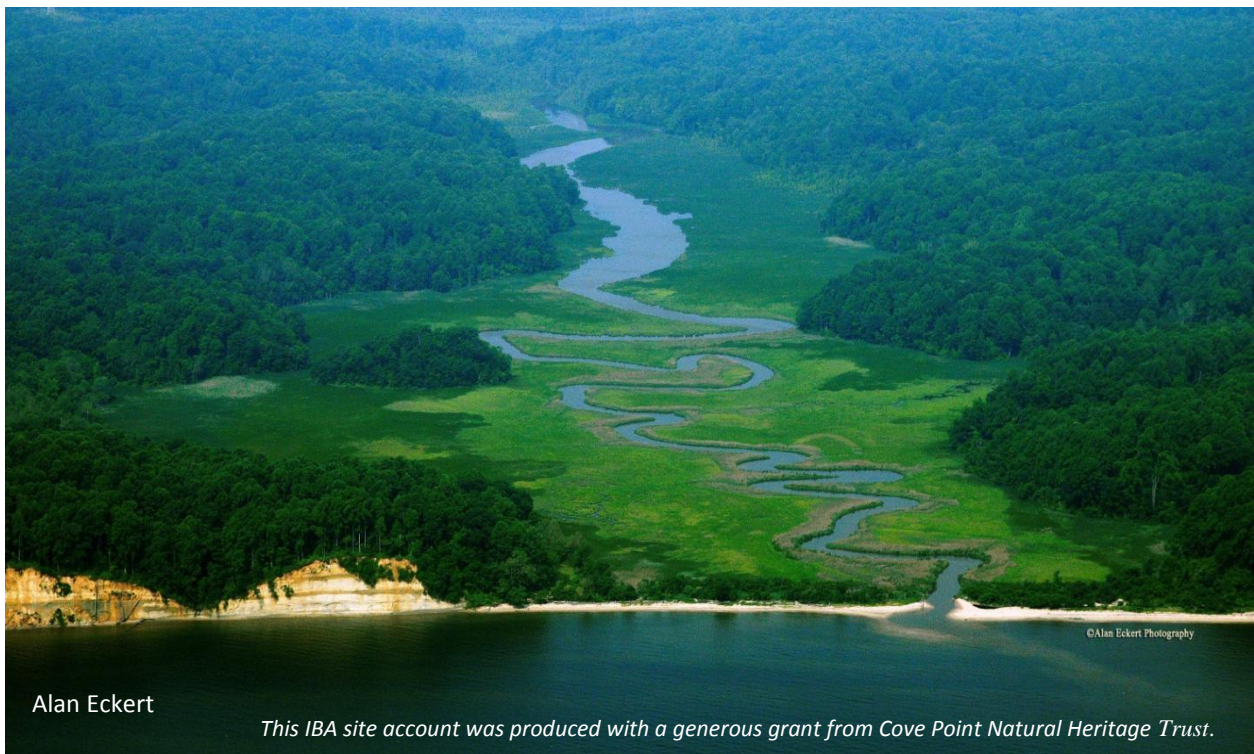
Some 965 acres of the Parkers Creek IBA are owned by the American Chestnut Land Trust (<http://www.actweb.org/introduction.cfm>). The Trust manages an additional 1,810 acres of land owned by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR owns 230 acres at the southern mouth of the creek; it is open to the public for education and research by permit only. About 1,244 acres of additional land in the Parkers Creek IBA is privately protected. The American Chestnut Land Trust was established in 1986 to protect 436 acres of land along Scientists Cliffs Road. They are responsible for much of the original conservation in the Parkers Creek IBA.

Threats and Conservation

Residential development continues to be a concern. The watershed could lose much of the remaining undeveloped lands that surround the Parkers Creek IBA without adequate zoning and land conservation. The introduction of invasive flora and fauna is also a threat to the area. Two additional potential threats are the excessive disturbance of birds and the deforestation and clear cutting in areas not otherwise protected.

On lands that it owns, the American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) has forest management and deer herd management programs. The deer management program has employed the stewards in the Parkers Creek Conservation Society. Stewardship service includes forest improvements, boundary marking, trail maintenance, machinery repairs, and invasive species control.

In 2016, deer herd management on DNR owned properties within the watershed will be implemented through public hunting. ACLT will continue to manage trail maintenance, public access, and educational programs on state-owned properties. ACLT plans to maintain and/or improve habitats for rare and endangered species by reducing non-native invasive plants, assessing flora and fauna to identify priority target areas for conservation, and teaching others how to do the same.



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

