

Shorelines

CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY

2022 SPRING NEWSLETTER

Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places



Rappahannock Tribe's Return to the River

PHOTO BY DUANE BERGER PHOTOGRAPHY

COVER STORY PAGE 4

Mission

The Chesapeake Conservancy's mission is to conserve and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. We serve as a catalyst for change, advancing strong public and private partnerships, developing and using new technology and empowering environmental stewardship.

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From the President & CEO

Resilience and Reconciliation

Spring proves nature's resilience following the hard winter months. In this spring issue of *Shorelines*, you'll read about two great stories of resilience and reconciliation.

Elktonia Beach is the last remnant of the once-thriving heart of Black entertainment and recreation in the mid-Atlantic during a time of forced racial segregation. Carr's Beach, Sparrow's Beach and neighboring Elktonia Beach in Annapolis, Maryland, were vacation getaways and prominent venues that welcomed Blacks and hosted renowned Black musicians. Let us not lose sight that Blacks welcomed whites to these performances or that the family-owned land was originally purchased by Frederick Carr, who had been born into slavery. On page 3, read about our partnership efforts to protect Elktonia Beach, create a public waterfront city park and share the Chesapeake's Black history. My friend, Vince Leggett, and others have worked tirelessly toward this day for 15 years.

Fones Cliffs on the Rappahannock River in Virginia are comprised of diatomite, which sparkles like crystals in the sun, and the beauty takes your breath away. This is also the ancestral homeland of the Rappahannock Tribe. Thanks to the generosity of the family of William Dodge Angle, M.D., and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through Walmart's Acres for America program, Chesapeake Conservancy was able to purchase and donate 465 acres of riverfront land to the Rappahannock Tribe. A story of separation and loss has turned into a story of resilience, restoration and reconnection. Read more on pages 4, 5 and 7.

There are also many recent legislative wins to celebrate. The Great Maryland Outdoors Act will greatly boost funding for Maryland state parks and help create new parks and enhance visitor services and access at existing parks. The Conservation Finance Act helps shape the future of Chesapeake restoration through private capital. This is the first state law in the country that will leverage private finance to benefit a state's climate, water quality and conservation goals.



Chesapeake Conservancy President & CEO Joel Dunn
PHOTO BY CHRISTINA HAMILTON

In Virginia, the General Assembly passed, and Gov. Youngkin signed into law, legislation that creates a new Virginia Black, Indigenous and People of Color Historic Preservation Fund. This fund will provide grants to state-recognized and federally recognized tribes, nonprofit organizations and localities for conservation and historic preservation activities on lands that have historical or cultural significance for Black, Indigenous and other racially and ethnically diverse communities.

The federal omnibus appropriations bill for fiscal year 2022 provides an important increase in funding for the Chesapeake Bay Program to \$88 million, \$15.25 million for USGS for Bay watershed science, \$4 million for the Chesapeake WILD program, \$2 million for the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Gateways Program, \$2 million for interpretation at the soon-to-be new city park at Elktonia Beach, \$1.2 million for infrastructure projects related to the Oyster House Park in Seaford, Delaware, and \$2 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund money to further protect additional properties at Fones Cliffs in the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joel E. Dunn'.

JOEL E. DUNN, *President and CEO*

Coming Soon: A Public Waterfront Park to Share the Chesapeake's Black History

On March 14, 2022, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced that the state will provide more than \$4.8 million toward the purchase of a historically significant waterfront property for the development of a new Annapolis public park.

Elktonia Beach, a 5-acre waterfront parcel on the Chesapeake Bay, is the last remnant of the original 180-acre property purchased by Fred Carr in 1902. Carr's and Sparrow's beaches were privately owned and operated by Fred Carr's daughters, Elizabeth Carr Smith and Florence Carr Sparrow. The "Beaches" (1930s-1970s), as they were called, represented the heart of entertainment throughout the mid-Atlantic region and welcomed Blacks during a time of segregation.

The City of Annapolis, Blacks of the Chesapeake, Chesapeake Conservancy and the state entered into an agreement with The Conservation Fund to acquire the property through a patchwork of funding, including federal, state and city Program Open Space funds. With the support of U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, the federal FY 22 spending bill also included \$2 million in congressionally directed spending to the City of Annapolis to support a state and local partnership effort to establish and develop a city park.

"This is a dream come true," said Vince Leggett, founder and president of Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation (BOCF). "Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation has been working for 15 years to preserve the meaningful and unique aspects of Black history and culture on the Chesapeake Bay at the site of Elktonia Beach, the last remnant contiguous to Carr's and Sparrow's beaches. This parcel directly fronting the Bay is so much more than just a pin or dot on a map. It serves as a national case study for the preservation and conservation of African American sites."

Leggett continued, "The perpetual preservation of Elktonia Beach as a city park will provide all residents and visitors to our capital city of Annapolis with direct access to the Chesapeake Bay. This property will serve as an authentic space to interpret and share the rich heritage of African Americans who sought recreation, leisure and entertainment in these safer places, away from segregation."

"Chesapeake Conservancy is proud to partner with Blacks of the Chesapeake and The Conservation Fund to see this dream become a reality. This parcel of land is symbolic of a significant part of Black history in the United States, as well as an important part of the city of Annapolis' history.

We are so grateful to the many partners and elected officials who helped create what will one day be a city waterfront park open for everyone to enjoy the Chesapeake while honoring our history," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. "This is a great day for everyone who has held a special place in their hearts for 'The Beaches.' Now this story can truly be told for generations to come."

Dunn added, "We are grateful to Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland Secretary of Natural Resources Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin and the private landowner who chose conservation for the future of this property. Also, thank you to our partners, Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, The Conservation Fund and the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, as well as other supporters of this effort, including Maryland State Senator Sarah Elfreth and Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman."



*Blacks of the Chesapeake Founder and President
Vince Leggett* COURTESY PHOTO



Chesapeake Bay Paddle Returns!

August 27-31, 2022

Join the paddle or donate to support Waterkeepers Chesapeake, the Oyster Recovery Partnership and Chesapeake Conservancy. Learn more at www.baypaddle.org



Rappahannock Tribe's Return to the River

FONES CLIFFS, RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER, VIRGINIA

PHOTO BY JEFFREY ALLENBY/CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY

On April 1, 2022, the Maskapow Drum Group's beats resonated in the chests of hundreds of Rappahannock Tribe citizens, partners and supporters at a deeply moving celebration. This was the first time the Rappahannock drums were heard on this land in almost 400 years.

Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson welcomed Tribe citizens, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland — the first Native American to serve as a Cabinet secretary and the second to serve in the Cabinet — and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams, among others, to announce that the Tribe had reacquired 465 acres at Fones Cliffs, a sacred site to the Tribe located on the eastern side of the Rappahannock River.

The land will be publicly accessible and held with a permanent conservation easement conveyed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Chesapeake Conservancy donated the easement to the USFWS, then donated the fee title to the Rappahannock Tribe, which intends to place the land in Trust with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Tribe plans trails and a replica Indigenous village, where tribal members can educate the public about their history and Indigenous approaches to conservation and connect future generations of Rappahannock youth to their tribal traditions and the river that bears their name.

The land offers opportunities for the Tribe to expand their Return to the River program, which trains tribal youth in traditional river knowledge and practices and conducts outreach and education for other communities interested in the Rappahannock River. In 2017, through the generosity of Ms. Virginia Warner, Chesapeake Conservancy facilitated the donation of a single acre of land near Fones Cliffs, which the Tribe uses as a staging area for the program.

Speaking at the celebration, Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn said: "Through the generosity of the family of William Dodge Angle, M.D., Chesapeake Conservancy is honored to facilitate the return of Fones Cliffs to the Tribe and to partner with them to bring Indigenous-led conservation practices back to the Rappahannock River. This is a significant step forward in the overall goal to save approximately 2,000 acres at Fones Cliffs, a haven for wildlife and waterfowl and one of the most beautiful places in the Chesapeake and, in fact, the world.

We are grateful to the previous owners of the land, the Morris family, for choosing conservation."

Dr. Carol Angle drew the crowd to its feet with an emotional speech. She challenged those present to see that the rest of the cliffs be conserved and donated back to the Tribe in support of President Biden's "America the Beautiful" goal of conserving 30% of the nation's land and waters by 2030—a top priority for Chesapeake Conservancy and many of our partners.

Additional funding for land for the Rappahannock Tribe was also made possible by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through Walmart's Acres for America Program.

In June 2019, partners gathered to celebrate the protection of 252 acres that were added to the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge for permanent protection through funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund that Chesapeake Conservancy helped to secure.



Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson (left) with Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland at the Return to the River Celebration on April 1, 2022.

PHOTO BY WILL PARSON / CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

"WE HAVE WORKED FOR MANY YEARS TO RESTORE THIS SACRED PLACE TO THE TRIBE. WITH EAGLES BEING PRAYER MESSENGERS, THIS AREA WHERE THEY GATHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE OF NATURAL, CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL IMPORTANCE."

— Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson

Thanks to The Conservation Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this parcel, referred to by the Tribe as its original name of Wecuppom, is now protected from development and will add opportunities for hiking and bird-watching.

Throughout the recent celebration, eagles, sacred to the Tribe, soared overhead. “Chief Anne has shown us the incredible value of tribal ecological perspectives — that all forms of life deserve ethical consideration — the personification of the land ethic,” said Dunn.

“Land is more than dirt and acres. Land anchors life. We can look out on this landscape and see the beauty and wonders of the natural world, from the soil and creatures beneath our toes to the tree canopy and the birds above.”



LEFT TO RIGHT: RICHARD REMMER, CONSERVATION ATTORNEY AND MEMBER OF THE ANGLE FAMILY; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SECRETARY DEB HAALAND; DR. CAROL ANGLE; RAPPAHANNOCK CHIEF ANNE RICHARDSON; AND CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY PRESIDENT AND CEO JOEL DUNN.

PHOTO BY TAMI HEILEMANN/DOI

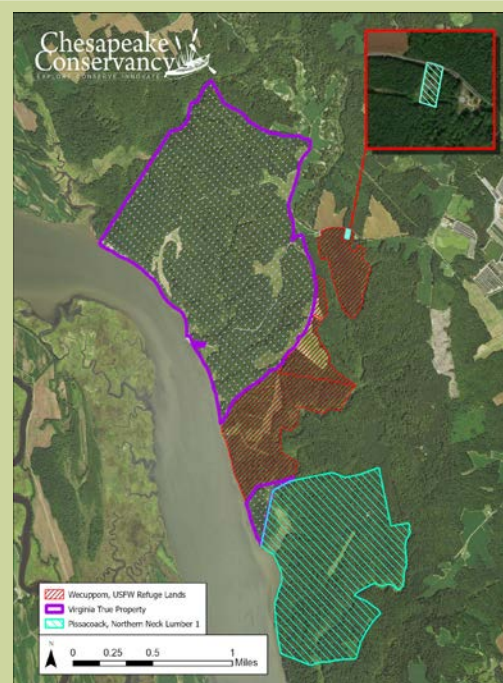
Nearby Land Along Fones Cliffs Still in Jeopardy

Even as this tremendous success at Pissacoack is celebrated, now is not the time for complacency. A nearby 968 acres (owned by Virginia True Corporation headquartered in New York) that adjoin Refuge property (referred to by the Tribe as Wecuppom) remain unprotected and vulnerable.

In 2015, the Virginia True Corporation received preliminary approval for a massive resort subdivision, complete with an 18-hole golf course, hundreds of condos and single-family homes, lodge, restaurant, stables and more. Three years later, the developers illegally cleared 13 acres to bare ground, in violation of state and county laws. The resulting erosion caused trees at the top of the cliffs to fall and the cliff face to slough off into the Rappahannock River.

In 2019, the company filed for bankruptcy protection, and the case remains unresolved. While the resort proposal appears thankfully dead, the property remains unprotected and therefore at risk.

Chesapeake Conservancy and other conservation partners are vigilantly tracking the bankruptcy proceedings such that a conservation outcome can be brought to bear. There is so much at stake for the Tribe, for the Refuge, for eagles and other wildlife, for water quality and for the Chesapeake that we must continue to work for its ultimate protection. Please help us save these 968 acres and donate today. Contact Matthew Provost at mprovost@chesapeakeconservancy.org to learn how you can help.



PURPLE OUTLINES THE PROPERTY OWNED BY VIRGINIA TRUE. THE TRIBE'S FIRST ACRE OF LAND, MADE POSSIBLE IN 2017 BY THE GENEROSITY OF VIRGINIA WARNER FACILITATED BY CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY, IS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE BOX.

Crazy Osprey Family Shows Ukrainian Support

Osprey wildlife webcam viewers had a surprise recently when Audrey brought her first stick back to the nest for this season. Every year, the osprey pair rebuild their Chesapeake Bay nest in preparation for egg laying and incubation using several sticks marked with ribbons by the Crazy Osprey Family, property owners where the nest is located. This year, Audrey's first stick was marked with a blue and yellow ribbon to show the Crazy Osprey Family's support for the people of Ukraine. This is a powerful gesture, and we are proud to document it on our wildlife webcam, in partnership with the Crazy Osprey Family and explore.org.



Racing Against Time: An Effort to Conserve the Delmarva Peninsula's Wetlands Gathers Momentum

By James I. Miller, USFWS

Reprinted and adapted with permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In a place where a short fall hike might reveal a couple dozen species of waterfowl, a few Delmarva fox squirrels and a stand of rare Atlantic white cedar, everyday bustle and the ticking of the clock can quickly disappear. Neither the bustle nor the clock is as far away as it seems, though.

Many who are invested in the future of what's been called "the Everglades of the North" — and includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge — are eyeing both as they work to keep a space for nature, to benefit all who depend upon it in one way or another.

"I think we're making progress," said Joel Dunn, president and CEO of the Chesapeake Conservancy, a nonprofit protecting landscapes throughout the greater 41-million-acre Chesapeake Bay watershed. "But we have a race against time."

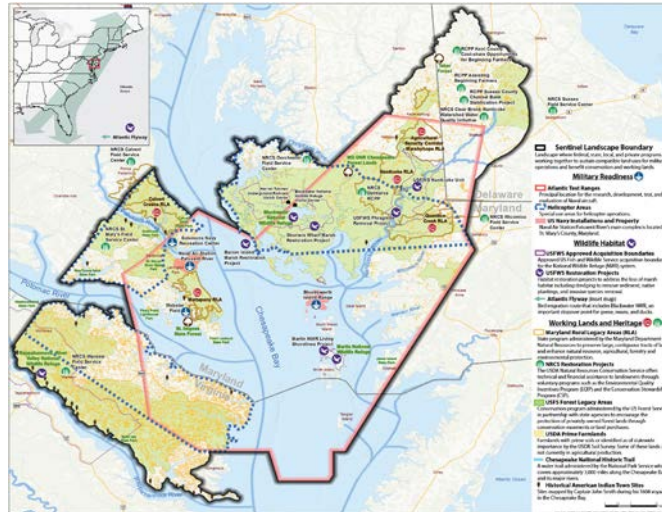
Mounting challenges

The landscape around the Delmarva Peninsula's Nanticoke and Blackwater rivers and Fishing Bay contains some of the Eastern United States' most pristine and productive wetlands.

They're an important stopover and breeding ground for millions of waterfowl, waterbirds and migratory birds. They also provide habitat for other priority species, including the highly vulnerable saltmarsh sparrow, eastern black rail, Delmarva fox squirrel and Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon.

Still, major challenges loom. One is development: Across Chesapeake Bay, the Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia metro areas boast a combined population of more than 15 million — and counting.

Another is climate change: In the peninsula's wetland landscape, thousands of acres have been lost to rising seas, and the prognosis is worrisome. By 2050, 50% of the lower Eastern Shore's high marshes — on which the saltmarsh sparrow and Eastern black rail rely — are expected to disappear.



Its objective is to promote base resilience and avoid development that could trigger flight restrictions at the U.S. Navy's premier aircraft testing location, Naval Air Station Patuxent River, and the associated Atlantic Test Ranges.

The Sentinel Landscape is one of many conservation-focused collaborations in the area that bring together public agencies at every level, nonprofits large and small, private foundations, community advocates and businesses to make significant gains.

Powerful partnerships

Two recently awarded grants in the Nanticoke-Blackwater-Fishing Bay landscape highlight how the Sentinel Landscape and some of the Chesapeake Bay watershed's conservation-focused partnerships work.

The grants — a \$3-million Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) challenge grant and a \$1.5-million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant — were awarded in 2020 and the fall of 2021.

Combined, they're being used to protect about 4,000 acres in a designated marsh migration corridor — where marsh habitat can move as rising seas push it inland — on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

An array of partners — including the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy in Maryland/DC, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, The Conservation Fund and Ducks Unlimited — worked to secure these competitive grants.

While habitat protection is also done through land acquisition, the work associated with these grants will happen with voluntary conservation easements that protect property for the long term while allowing some traditional uses.

Read this article in its entirety at Medium.com, published in "Conserving the Nature of the Northeast."

Cautious optimism

Much work has been done by a remarkable constellation of partners. In recent years, a powerful concept called a "Sentinel Landscape" is also helping meet these challenges.

"About 33% of the Nanticoke-Blackwater landscape has been protected," Dunn said. "It's become what I would argue is the premier example on the East Coast of the president's goal for land and water conservation."

"We've been super-lucky to have so many partners doing really terrific work out there. We're striving to work smarter together — to leverage our networks and resources and knowledge to enhance our collective ability to achieve our goals," he said.

Case in point: the roughly 2.2-million-acre Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape

The U.S. departments of Agriculture, Defense and the Interior developed the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership to help protect natural and working lands near defense facilities from land use that is incompatible with the military's mission.

The Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape was established in 2015 and envelops the Nanticoke, Blackwater and Fishing Bay wetlands in its three-state footprint.

Donor Spotlight: The Family of William Dodge Angle, M.D.

For over a decade, Chesapeake Conservancy approached various government agencies, foundations and individuals regarding its work with the Rappahannock Tribe and other partners to protect Fones Cliffs. In 2019, a connection was made with Richard Remmer — a conservation attorney and a member of the Angle family — and The Wilderness Society (TWS). The stars aligned as TWS was helping Mr. Remmer locate an area for conservation that would be of high value for waterfowl and other wildlife. TWS inquired if Chesapeake Conservancy knew of a special place. Chesapeake Conservancy didn't miss a beat: "Fones Cliffs on the Rappahannock River in Virginia, and there's a project ready to go," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. An introduction was made to Dr. Carol Angle, who wanted to honor the memory of her late husband, William Dodge Angle, M.D., and his love of waterfowl with a significant gift.

The rest is history. The family of William Dodge Angle, M.D., donated the funding needed to purchase 465 acres for the Rappahannock Tribe, with additional funding provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through Walmart's Acres for America Program.

"When I met Dr. Carol Angle, I knew I was meeting someone who had changed the course of history. As a pediatrician, she studied the effects of lead exposure to children and is widely considered responsible for the removal of lead from gasoline in the United States," said Dunn.

Dr. Angle gave a rousing speech at the Return to the River Celebration on April 1. (See article, p.4) "At this time of the year, one of the avian behaviors we see is territorial defense. Had we been in this spot or near here in August of 1608, we might have seen the Rappahannock Tribe defending their territory against the English explorers. In the ensuing 400 years, much has ensued, some of it unpleasant reminders of man's capacity to injure fellow man. It also reminds us of the resilience of the human spirit—the spirit that brought the Rappahannock Tribe to the river in the first place, and that returned them to the river where they once thrived and where they will thrive again.



From left to right: Dr. Fritz Angle, Dr. Carol Angle, Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson, Dr. Marcia Angle, Richard Remmer PHOTO BY JOEL DUNN

Fones Cliffs have been a sentinel watching over the Rappahannock for thousands of years, watching over the human and wild inhabitants," said Dr. Angle.

"It is our hope that this incredible team of a sovereign nation, NGOs and private partners will continue to work together to preserve all of Fones Cliffs. It is clear that Indigenous knowledge and cooperation is needed NOW to help save our natural resources, and Fones Cliffs will hopefully inspire others to reach out and partner up," said Richard Remmer.

Conservancy Board & Staff News

John Neely rotated off the Chesapeake Conservancy board, having served since 2016. We are deeply grateful for his leadership and dedication. Board member Jeffrey Sabot was elected to the position of treasurer. In March, board member Dr. Mamie Parker was selected by Forbes Magazine to go to Abu Dhabi and Dubai for the Forbes 30/50 International Women's Summit.

Chesapeake Conservancy congratulates Charles "Chuck" F. Sams, III, the new director of the National Park Service. A citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Director Sams is the first Native American to lead the National Park Service and is the first permanent director of the department since 2017. Chesapeake Conservancy also welcomes Martha Williams as the new director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Director Williams previously served as the Department of the Interior's deputy solicitor for parks and wildlife (2013-2017) and most recently as deputy director of USFWS.

President and CEO Joel Dunn hosted Superintendent Deanna Mitchell, Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, on Chesapeake Conservancy's podcast, Chesapeake Conversations. Tune in through the Conservancy's website or wherever you download podcasts to hear her story about the Harriet Tubman pin her mother gave her as a child and her journey back to Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Chesapeake Conservancy welcomes Senior Data Scientist Michael Evans, Ph.D., a data scientist with expertise in remote sensing and artificial intelligence. He joins Data Science Lead/Senior Data Scientist Kumar Mainali, Ph.D., who has worked as the geospatial data scientist at the organization's Conservation Innovation Center since 2019.

Matthew Provost has been promoted to senior vice president of development and business strategy and Susan Stephenson to director of federal business development.



BOARD CHAIR RANDY LARRIMORE (L) AND JOHN NEELY (R) PHOTO BY JODY COUSER

Chesapeake Conservancy extends our heartfelt thanks to Melissa Ehrenreich and Emily Mills who have left to pursue other professional opportunities.



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One of the most significant ways you can leave a legacy for future generations while enjoying tax savings is by choosing Chesapeake Conservancy as the next steward of your land. As development encroaches on the last open spaces in the Chesapeake watershed, we encourage landowners to consider Chesapeake Conservancy's Gift Lands program. This is the greatest gift that you can leave behind.

This is your legacy. For more information, contact Matt Provost at mprovost@chesapeakeconservancy.org.



PHOTO BY ROB SCHENK