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The Center for Conservation Biology completes delineation of 10 Important Bird Areas on the Coastal Plain of Virginia

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) program is a science-based initiative designed to identify, conserve, and monitor sites that provide essential habitat for bird populations. Developed in Europe, the program has expanded to become an international network of conservation sites. Under this initiative, sites that are critical for the long-term survival of bird populations have been identified across the globe using internationally agreed upon criteria. The quality and effectiveness of this conservation network depends directly on the information resources and expertise used in its development.

In 2006 with funds provided by the Coastal Zone Management Program and in cooperation with the recently established Virginia IBA Program, the Center for Conservation Biology used existing information resources to delineate 10 important bird areas within the coastal plain of Virginia. On the outer coastal fringe these areas include the Virginia Barrier Island/Lagoon IBA, Delmarva Bayside Marshes IBA, Chesapeake Islands IBA, Lower Delmarva IBA, and Back Bay IBA. On the inner coastal plain these areas include the Lower James River IBA, Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers IBA, Rappahannock River Tidal Fresh IBA, Potomac River Tidal Fresh IBA, and Western Shore Marshes IBA. All of these areas play a significant role in the life cycle of bird species of high conservation concern. Their delineation should help to focus conservation actions on the resources needed to sustain these populations for the long term.

Fact sheets and associated materials for these important sites were presented in two reports that may be accessed from the Center's website <http://www.ccb-wm.org>.

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