



Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")
submitted to the
Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management/NOAA
April 2009 – September 2009

CZMA Performance Measure Area: Coastal Habitat Protection

Identification & Description of Issue: Protection of neotropical migratory songbird stopover habitat and migration corridors

Geographic Location: Northampton County on the southern tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore in Congressional District 2

How the Virginia CZM Program Was Involved: In 1989 the Virginia CZM Program was approached by Virginia's Natural Heritage Program for funds to conduct a "natural heritage inventory" of Northampton County. DCR wanted to document the importance of the county for migrating neotropical songbirds. Volunteers had been banding songbirds at a private campground on the lower bayside of the Eastern Shore since the 1960s. The owner of that site wanted to sell the property, which could have meant the end of a 20 year continuous bird banding record and the loss of some very important stopover habitat. The bird banders knew that millions of birds were using the southern tip as a rest area during fall migration to central and South America, but they had no scientific data on the numbers and the extent of the critical migration and stopover habitat. So the Virginia CZM Program applied for and received an *interstate* competitive (old Section 309) CZM grant from NOAA that allowed us to document the mid-Atlantic migration corridor from New Jersey through Virginia. **The Neotropical Migratory Songbird Coastal Corridor Study** showed significantly higher concentrations of birds along the coastlines and at the tips of the two prominent peninsulas: Cape May, New Jersey and Cape Charles, Virginia. That study was followed by two additional fall field seasons of research under the CZM initiated and funded **Northampton County Special Area Management Plan** (new Section 309 funds). See attached report.

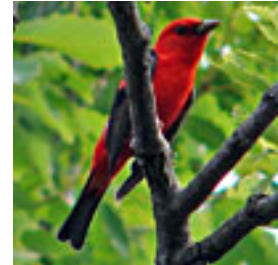
Quantitative Summary of Accomplishment and Outcomes: Since 1989, as a result of the CZM initiated and funded seminal research studies, 3,188 acres of critical migratory songbird habitat have been acquired, including Kiptopeke State Park, major expansions to the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, several state Natural Area Preserves and many conservation easements. See attached table.

CZM Funds Expended & Other Funds Leveraged: NOAA awarded Virginia CZM \$165,000 in 1989 for the interstate study and another \$144,000 (in 1990 and 1991) for two additional field seasons of songbird research through the Northampton SAMP. Thus, a total of \$309,000 in CZM dollars lead to the leveraging of about \$35 million from a variety of

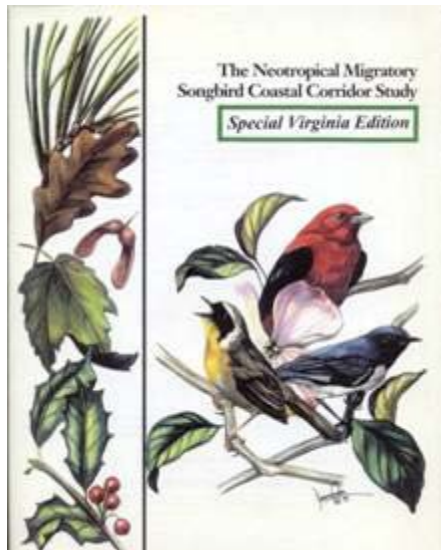
funding sources to acquire 3,188 acres of critical migratory bird habitat on the hemispherically important southern tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Protecting Migratory Bird Habitat on the Southern Tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore: Efforts of the Virginia CZM Program and its Partners

For 20 years, the "Southern Tip Partners" - comprised of the Virginia CZM Program, the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR), the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (DGIF), the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy - have been working to acquire and protect land on the southern tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore. *(photo left - Scarlet Tanager by Jason Duncan/ Smithsonian Institution)*



Research: In 1989, the Virginia CZM Program was approached by Virginia's Natural Heritage Program at DCR for funds to conduct a "natural heritage inventory" of Northampton County. DCR wanted to document the importance of the county for migrating neotropical songbirds – small, colorful, perching birds that nest in the deep forests of Canada and the northeastern US and then migrate in the fall to Central and South America's tropical rain forests where they spend the winter. One example is the Blackpoll warbler that can fly from New England to Venezuela in 60-80 hours. But most migrants take a leisurely 4-8 weeks. Volunteers had been banding songbirds at a private



campground on the lower bayside of the Eastern Shore since the 1960s. The owner of that site wanted to sell the property, which could have meant the end of a 20 year continuous bird banding record. These bird banders knew that hundreds of thousands of birds (if not millions) were using the southern tip as a rest area during fall migration, but they had no hard scientific data on the numbers and the extent of the critical migration and stopover habitat.

As we continued talking, it was clear that the issue extended beyond Virginia. What we really needed to do was document the importance of a mid-Atlantic flyway with major "stopover" or rest stops. So the Virginia CZM Program applied for and received an *interstate* coastal zone management (CZM) grant from NOAA that allowed us to document the mid-Atlantic migration

corridor from New Jersey through Virginia. All 5 of the "Southern Tip Partners" contributed to **The Neotropical Migratory Songbird Coastal Corridor Study**, which documented significantly higher concentrations of birds along the coastlines and at the tips of the two prominent peninsulas: Cape May, New Jersey and Cape Charles, Virginia.

Policy: In 1991, after completion of the interstate study, the Virginia CZM Program applied for funding from NOAA to develop a **Northampton County Special Area Management**

Plan. That 6 year effort allowed the “Southern Tip Partners” (with help from William and Mary’s Center for Conservation Biology) to scientifically identify the most important areas to protect on the southern tip of Virginia’s Eastern Shore. These critical and important areas can now be viewed on our internet mapping system, Coastal GEMS:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/coastal/coastalgems.html>.

Once the science was done, policy development began. With CZM funding through the Northampton SAMP, the “Southern Tip Partners” and the county developed **overlay zones and ordinances** to protect the identified critical habitat. The county also worked on ordinances to protect sensitive groundwater resources. Although most of the ordinances proved politically difficult to adopt at the time, the county continues to work today toward protecting its critical habitats and water quality.

The Northampton SAMP also allowed the “Southern Tip Partners” and Center for Conservation Biology to develop a **habitat management guide for landowners** so that even if the ordinances were not adopted, willing landowners would have a guide to what they could do on their land to provide better bird habitat.



Economic Development: Through the Northampton SAMP, the Virginia CZM Program initiated the annual **Eastern Shore of Virginia Birding Festival** to demonstrate that there could be economic benefits, if the bird habitat were protected. The first festival was held in 1993 with the help of our “Southern Tip Partners” and the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce. An art contest is held among the local high schools and the winning art is used to create the festival poster and paper placemats for local restaurants.

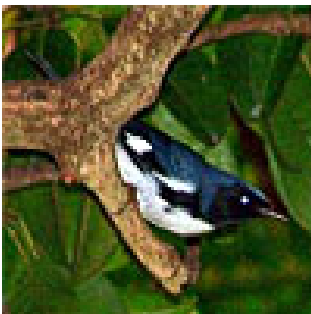


Another result of the Northampton SAMP was the development of an **Ecotour Guide Certification Course**. The Virginia CZM Program provided funding first to the Department of Conservation & Recreation and subsequently to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to create and offer the course. About 18 guides were certified but those certifications expired in December 2007. Recently the Virginia CZM Program funded the Eastern Shore of Virginia Community College to create and offer a suite of ecotourism courses which was offered in fall of 2009.

Land Acquisition: Once the research was finished, the “Southern Tip Partners” pooled resources and funds to acquire lands on the southern tip to permanently conserve migratory bird habitat that built on the core provided by the Eastern Shore of Virginia Wildlife Refuge, DGIF’s Mockhorn Wildlife Management Area and The Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) adjacent barrier islands. In 1992, the old campground where the bird banders had operated since the 1960’s was successfully purchased by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is now known as **Kiptopeke State Park**. In 1999, 165 acres were added to the south of the park using a combination of funds that included about \$500,000 from the Virginia CZM Program.

In the late 1990’s, the Virginia CZM Program prepared a grant application to the US Fish & Wildlife Service on behalf of Northampton County to acquire about 29 acres that eventually became the **Cape Charles Natural Area Preserve**, managed by Virginia’s Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR). The Virginia CZM Program and others also funded bird habitat restoration at this site.

The most recent land acquisition on the southern tip involved two major purchases by TNC totalling over \$13 million and almost 600 acres. TNC held these lands for several years until the other Southern Tip partners could secure grant funds to buy them. In 2008, the **Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge** was expanded with 82 acres on the southern bayside and 206 acres on the southern seaside. The northern 285 acres of the seaside tract has been purchased by DCR and is now known as the **Magothy Bay Natural Area Preserve** which abuts DGIF’s Mockhorn Wildlife Management Area. The Virginia CZM Program contributed about \$1.3 million toward the acquisition of Magothy Bay NAP (*photo right*).



More land needs to be protected if we are to compensate for lands being converted to housing developments in this area. Migratory songbirds play very important ecological and economic roles. They consume tons of insects that would otherwise plague us and our crops. They provide the basis for a unique ecotourism opportunity

to witness the “miracle of migration” up close - an opportunity that it is unparalleled on the east coast of the United States. If we lose Virginia’s “stopover habitat” to buildings and pavement, these birds will starve. They also will be exposed to predators such as hawks and falcons. Raptors can pluck them out of the air if they can’t dive into nearby dense trees and shrubs quickly enough. Migratory songbirds also need the berries and insects provide by dense, understory trees and shrubs for energy to fly to the tropics. A migratory songbird may need to double its mass in preparation for fall migration. Even though they can burn fat at the fuel efficiency of 720,000 miles/gallon, it’s still a very long, tough trip for a bird that can weigh less than the change in one’s pocket. *(photo - black-throated blue warbler by Jason Duncan/Smithsonian Institution)*

Neotropical songbirds numbers have been declining at an alarming rate. They face many challenges across the span of habitats they use in North and Central America however acre for acre, migration stopover habitats may be the most critical. Millions of birds are funneled into the tips of long peninsulas like Virginia’s Eastern Shore as they fly south. These areas become “bottlenecks” where the birds must find food and cover quickly, or perish. Disconnects or gaps in the useable habitat such as croplands, lawns, pavement and roof tops, create dangerous areas the songbirds must cross and risk being preyed upon by raptors that use the same the migration flyway.

Help from a Friend: The “Southern Tip Partners” are incredibly fortunate and grateful to have a very special partner who has joined the cause. Over the past two years, legendary singer/songwriter James Taylor and his wife Kim (personal friends of the Virginia CZM Program Manager) have donated funds for land acquisition and habitat restoration on the southern tip. They contributed to the acquisition of Magothy Bay Natural Area Preserve and to an effort by the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory to plant native, bird-friendly trees and shrubs on protected lands in the southern tip area. On May 22, 2008, James Taylor kicked off his summer tour with a **concert at the Virginia Beach Verizon Wireless Amphitheater**. A portion of the proceeds (about \$200,000) went to the “Southern Tip Partnership” to acquire a 26 acre in-holding (the “Morgan Tract”) at Kiptopeke State Park on the southern tip of Virginia’s Eastern Shore. With the help of this internationally famous singer passing through Virginia, we hope our little international migratory warblers will also sing (and find plenty of Virginia hospitality) as they pass through our Eastern Shore. *(left - James Taylor by Dan Borris; below - Prothonotary warbler by Teta Kaine)*



For more information contact:


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The Birds' Eye View Today
(only from Kiptopeke south and not including all parcels in attached Excel table)



**Lands Protected for Migratory Bird Conservation
on the Southern Tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore**

 Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS)	 Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS)
 Kiptopeke State Park (DCR)	 Pickett's Harbor Preserve (TNC)
 Mockhorn Wildlife Management Area (DGIF)	 Magothy Bay Natural Area Preserve (DCR)
 Smith Island (TNC)	

**Southern Tip of Eastern Shore Properties (south of Eastville)
Acquired Since 1989 CZM Songbird Studies**

Parcel Name	Owner	Acres	Price or Value
Kiptopeke State Park	DCR	371	\$7,150,000
Parson's Tract Addition to KSP	DCR	165	\$1,470,000
Trower Natural Area Preserve	DCR	35	\$300,000
Savage Neck NAP	DCR	298	\$2,025,000
Cherry Grove Easement	VESLT	222	\$3,300,000
Cape Charles NAP	Northampton County	29	\$356,000
Latimer	USFWS	27	\$263,000
Richardson Easement	Northampton County PDR/VOF	268	\$1,000,000
Jones Easement	TNC	182	\$530,000
Magothy NAP (Bull north)	DCR	285	\$3,850,000
Bull (south)	USFWS	206	\$2,380,000
Elliott's Creek Easement	TNC	211	\$1,800,000
Lewis Tract (in Oyster)	TNC	51	\$446,000
Cropp Tract (in Oyster)	TNC	34	\$250,000
O'Connor Easement	TNC	54	\$783,000
Black Easement (Plantation Creek)	TNC	222	\$1,100,000
Dixon	USFWS	82	\$6,000,000
Dixon Easement	TNC	44	\$110,000
Wise Point	USFWS	376	\$1,500,000
Morgan Tract at KSP	TNC	26	\$632,000
TOTALS		3,188	\$35,245,000