



Securing a Future for Maryland's Birds



Audubon MARYLAND-DC

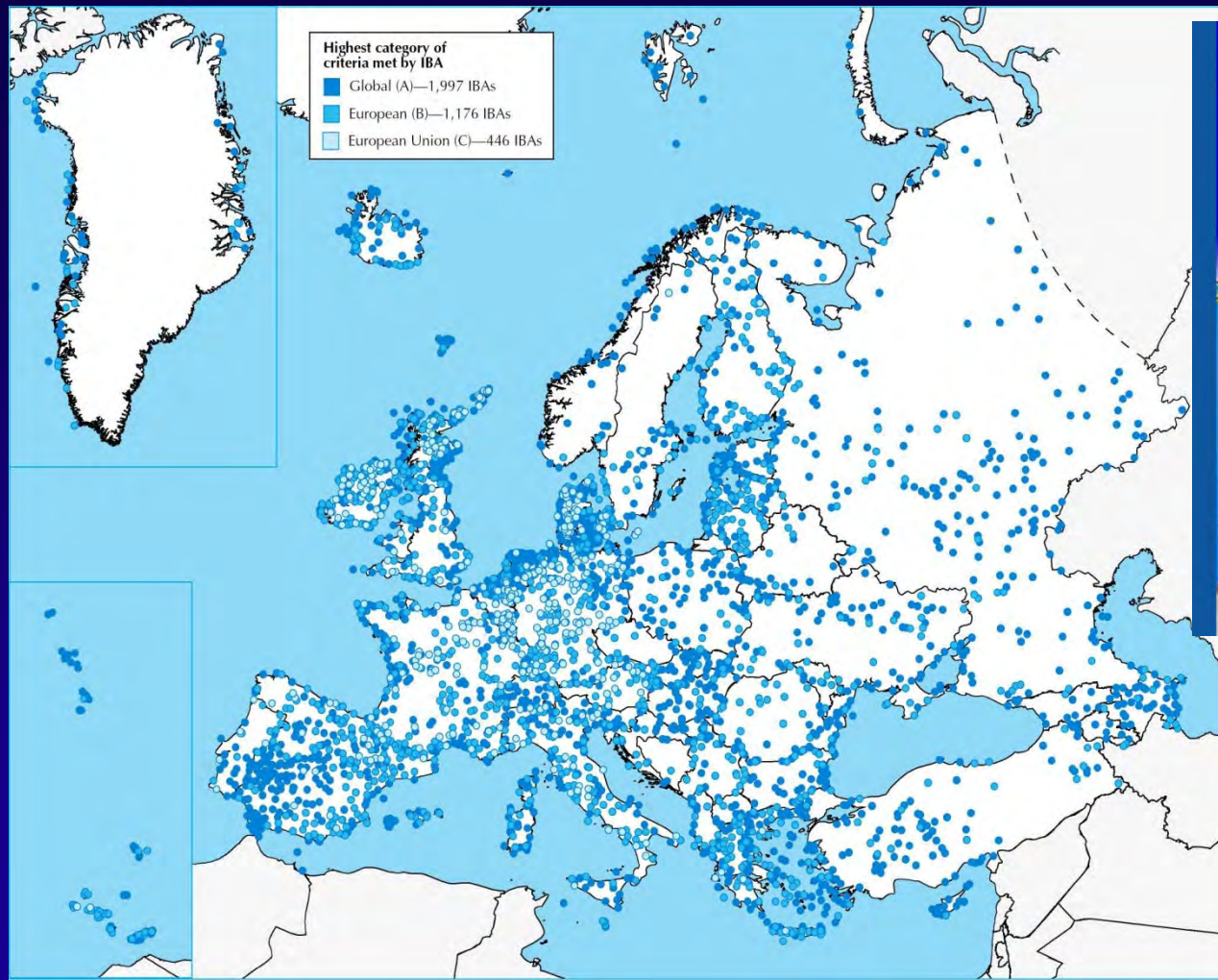
Audubon's Important Bird Areas program

The background of the slide is a photograph showing several tall, thin poles with multiple bird nests attached to them. The scene is set against a bright orange and red sunset sky. The silhouettes of the poles and nests are dark against the lighter sky. A few birds are visible in flight, and some are perched on the poles.

Major goal:

Identify a network of sites that contain habitat needed to maintain healthy bird populations, and focus conservation efforts on these sites.

Program initiated by BirdLife International in mid-1980s



3,619 IBAs cover 7% of Europe

Many Published Country and Continent Inventories



Important Bird Areas program

Objectives

- **Identify** the most essential habitats for birds.
- **Monitor** these sites for changes to birds and habitats.
- **Conserve** these areas for long-term protection of bird populations.



Site criteria based on vulnerabilities

- IBAs provide habitat for:

1. Sites important to bird species at-risk
2. Sites important to bird assemblages, vulnerable because they are dependent on **a particular habitat type**
3. Sites where native birds concentrate in significant numbers



**Category 1 At-risk species:
IBA threshold population
size**

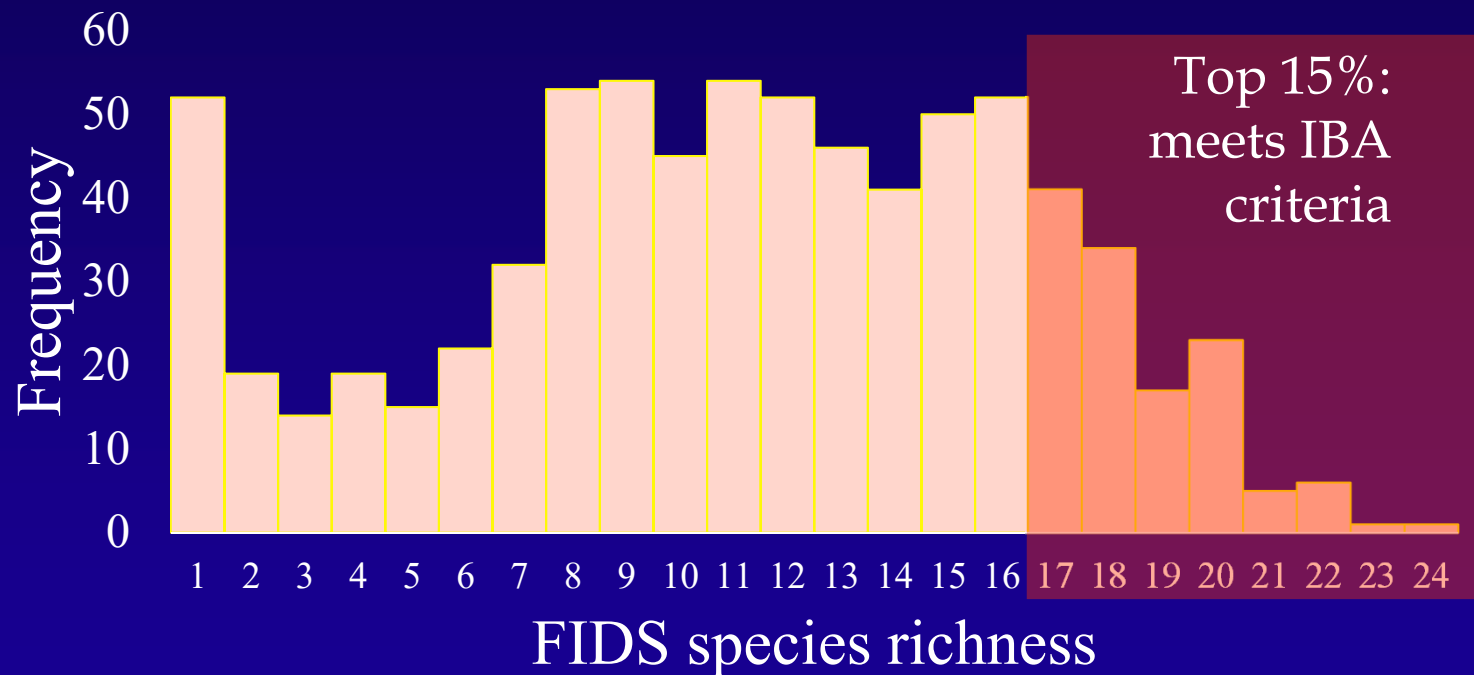


**Common Tern
Threshold = 30 pairs**



Category 2 Diverse habitat specialist assemblages

BBA block FIDS species richness (Coastal plain region)



Bird Blitz – find new IBAs

Volunteer bird survey

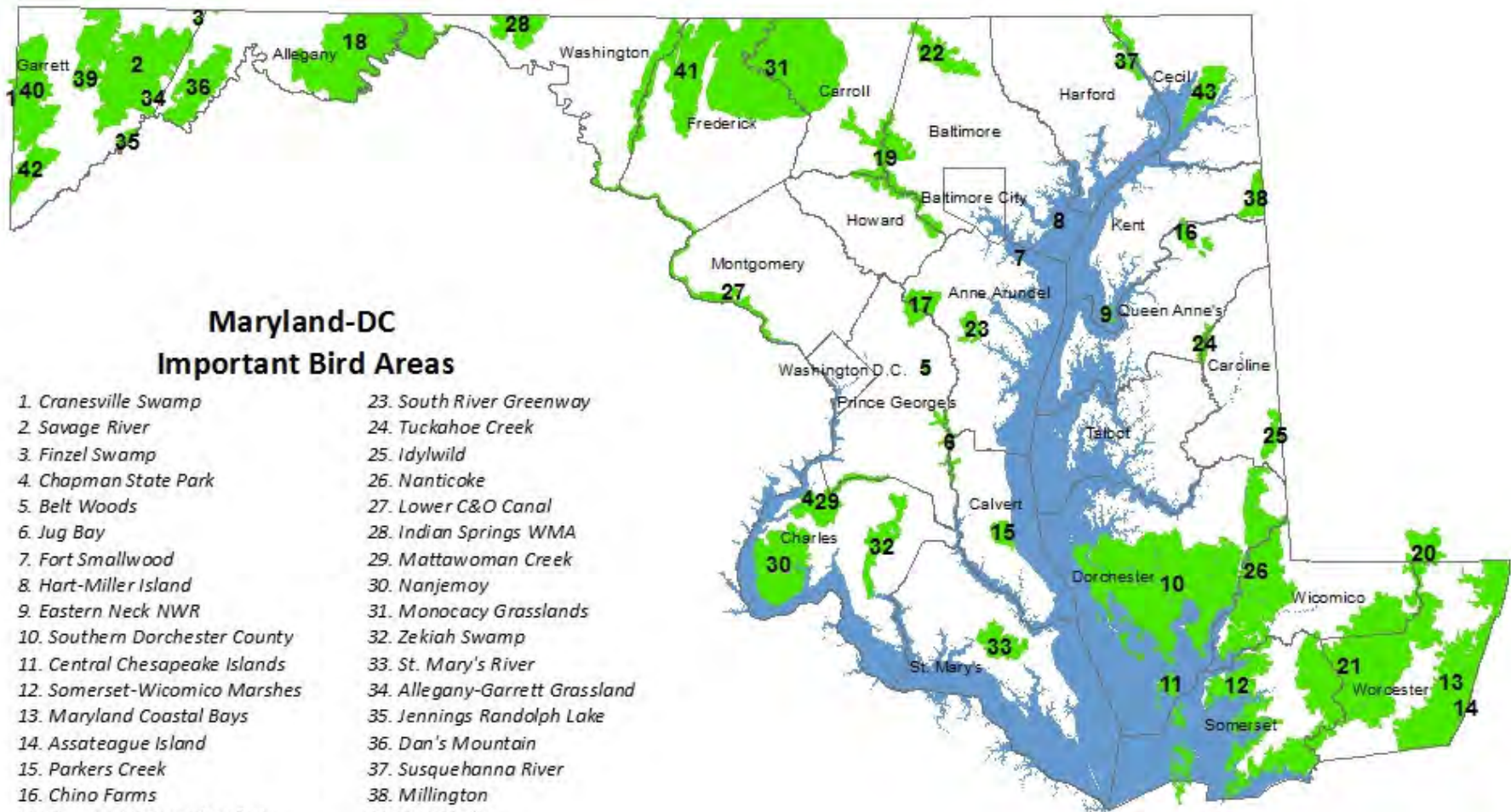
Targeted at IBA priority species

Birds are counted and mapped using GPS



Audubon

Important Bird Areas in Maryland-DC



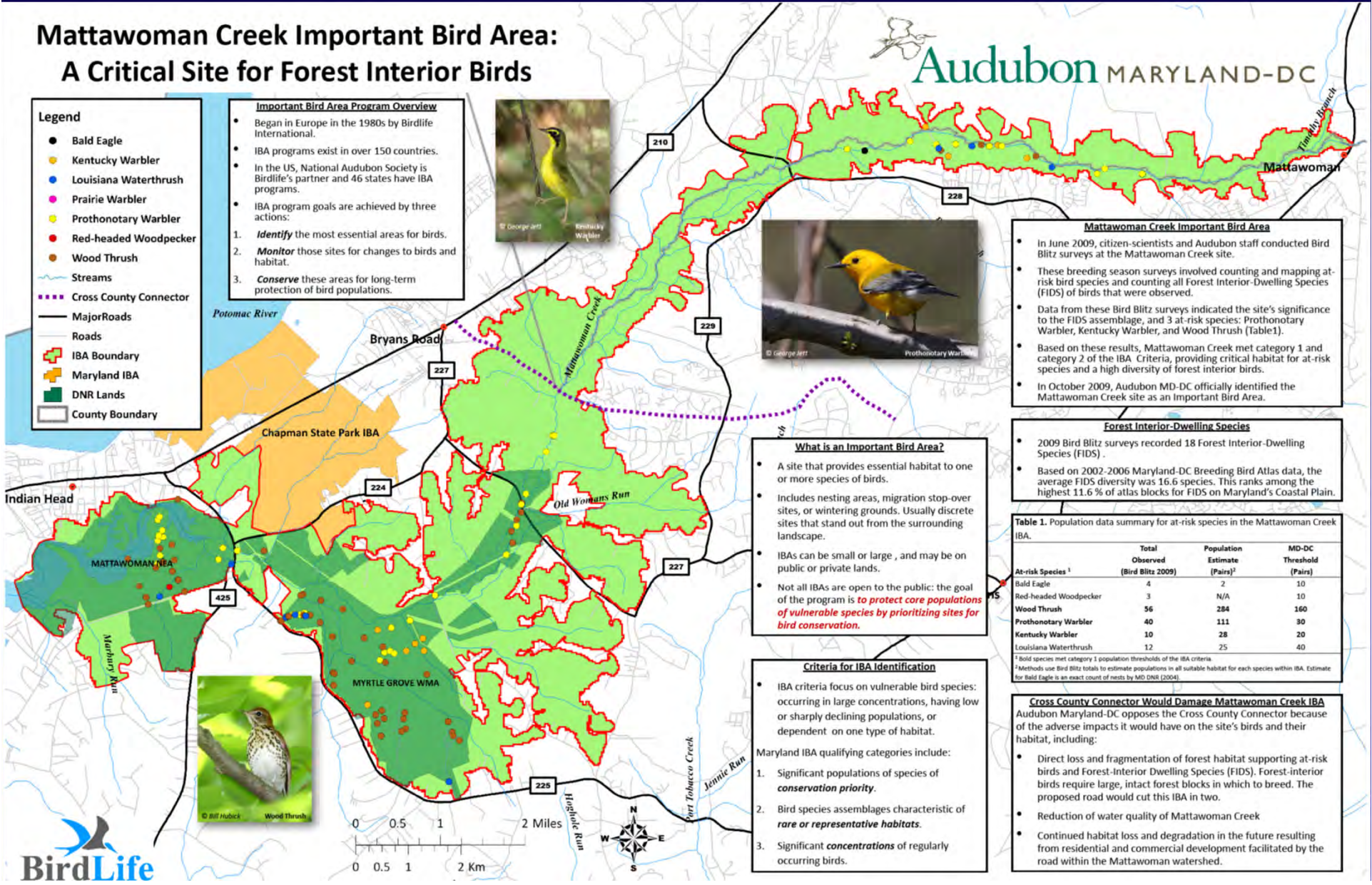
Maryland-DC Important Bird Areas

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Cranesville Swamp | 23. South River Greenway |
| 2. Savage River | 24. Tuckahoe Creek |
| 3. Finzel Swamp | 25. Idylwild |
| 4. Chapman State Park | 26. Nanticoke |
| 5. Belt Woods | 27. Lower C&O Canal |
| 6. Jug Bay | 28. Indian Springs WMA |
| 7. Fort Smallwood | 29. Mattawoman Creek |
| 8. Hart-Miller Island | 30. Nanjemoy |
| 9. Eastern Neck NWR | 31. Monocacy Grasslands |
| 10. Southern Dorchester County | 32. Zekiah Swamp |
| 11. Central Chesapeake Islands | 33. St. Mary's River |
| 12. Somerset-Wicomico Marshes | 34. Allegany-Garrett Grassland |
| 13. Maryland Coastal Bays | 35. Jennings Randolph Lake |
| 14. Assateague Island | 36. Dan's Mountain |
| 15. Parkers Creek | 37. Susquehanna River |
| 16. Chino Farms | 38. Millington |
| 17. Patuxent Research Refuge | 39. The Glades |
| 18. Green Ridge | 40. Youghiogheny Valley |
| 19. Patapsco Valley | 41. Maryland Blue Ridge |
| 20. Great Cypress Swamp | 42. Pleasant Valley |
| 21. Pocomoke-Nassawango | 43. Elk Neck |
| 22. Prettyboy | |

Audubon helps defeat proposed highway in Charles County

Mattawoman Creek Important Bird Area: A Critical Site for Forest Interior Birds

Audubon MARYLAND-DC



- Legend**
- Bald Eagle
 - Kentucky Warbler
 - Louisiana Waterthrush
 - Prairie Warbler
 - Prothonotary Warbler
 - Red-headed Woodpecker
 - Wood Thrush
 - Streams
 - Cross County Connector
 - Major Roads
 - Roads
 - ▭ IBA Boundary
 - ▭ Maryland IBA
 - ▭ DNR Lands
 - ▭ County Boundary

Important Bird Area Program Overview

- Began in Europe in the 1980s by BirdLife International.
- IBA programs exist in over 150 countries.
- In the US, National Audubon Society is BirdLife's partner and 46 states have IBA programs.
- IBA program goals are achieved by three actions:
 1. **Identify** the most essential areas for birds.
 2. **Monitor** those sites for changes to birds and habitat.
 3. **Conserve** these areas for long-term protection of bird populations.



Mattawoman Creek Important Bird Area

- In June 2009, citizen-scientists and Audubon staff conducted Bird Blitz surveys at the Mattawoman Creek site.
- These breeding season surveys involved counting and mapping at-risk bird species and counting all Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS) of birds that were observed.
- Data from these Bird Blitz surveys indicated the site's significance to the FIDS assemblage, and 3 at-risk species: Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Wood Thrush (Table 1).
- Based on these results, Mattawoman Creek met category 1 and category 2 of the IBA Criteria, providing critical habitat for at-risk species and a high diversity of forest interior birds.
- In October 2009, Audubon MD-DC officially identified the Mattawoman Creek site as an Important Bird Area.

What is an Important Bird Area?

- A site that provides essential habitat to one or more species of birds.
- Includes nesting areas, migration stop-over sites, or wintering grounds. Usually discrete sites that stand out from the surrounding landscape.
- IBAs can be small or large, and may be on public or private lands.
- Not all IBAs are open to the public: the goal of the program is **to protect core populations of vulnerable species by prioritizing sites for bird conservation.**

Forest Interior-Dwelling Species

- 2009 Bird Blitz surveys recorded 18 Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS).
- Based on 2002-2006 Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas data, the average FIDS diversity was 16.6 species. This ranks among the highest 11.6% of atlas blocks for FIDS on Maryland's Coastal Plain.

Table 1. Population data summary for at-risk species in the Mattawoman Creek IBA.

At-risk Species ¹	Total Observed (Bird Blitz 2009)	Population Estimate (Pairs) ²	MD-DC Threshold (Pairs)
Bald Eagle	4	2	10
Red-headed Woodpecker	3	N/A	10
Wood Thrush	56	284	160
Prothonotary Warbler	40	111	90
Kentucky Warbler	10	28	20
Louisiana Waterthrush	12	25	40

¹ Bold species met category 1 population thresholds of the IBA criteria.
² Methods use Bird Blitz totals to estimate populations in all suitable habitat for each species within IBA. Estimate for Bald Eagle is an exact count of nests by MD DNR (2004).

Criteria for IBA Identification

- IBA criteria focus on vulnerable bird species: occurring in large concentrations, having low or sharply declining populations, or dependent on one type of habitat.

Maryland IBA qualifying categories include:

1. Significant populations of species of **conservation priority.**
2. Bird species assemblages characteristic of **rare or representative habitats.**
3. Significant **concentrations** of regularly occurring birds.

Cross County Connector Would Damage Mattawoman Creek IBA

Audubon Maryland-DC opposes the Cross County Connector because of the adverse impacts it would have on the site's birds and their habitat, including:

- Direct loss and fragmentation of forest habitat supporting at-risk birds and Forest-Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS). Forest-interior birds require large, intact forest blocks in which to breed. The proposed road would cut this IBA in two.
- Reduction of water quality of Mattawoman Creek
- Continued habitat loss and degradation in the future resulting from residential and commercial development facilitated by the road within the Mattawoman watershed.



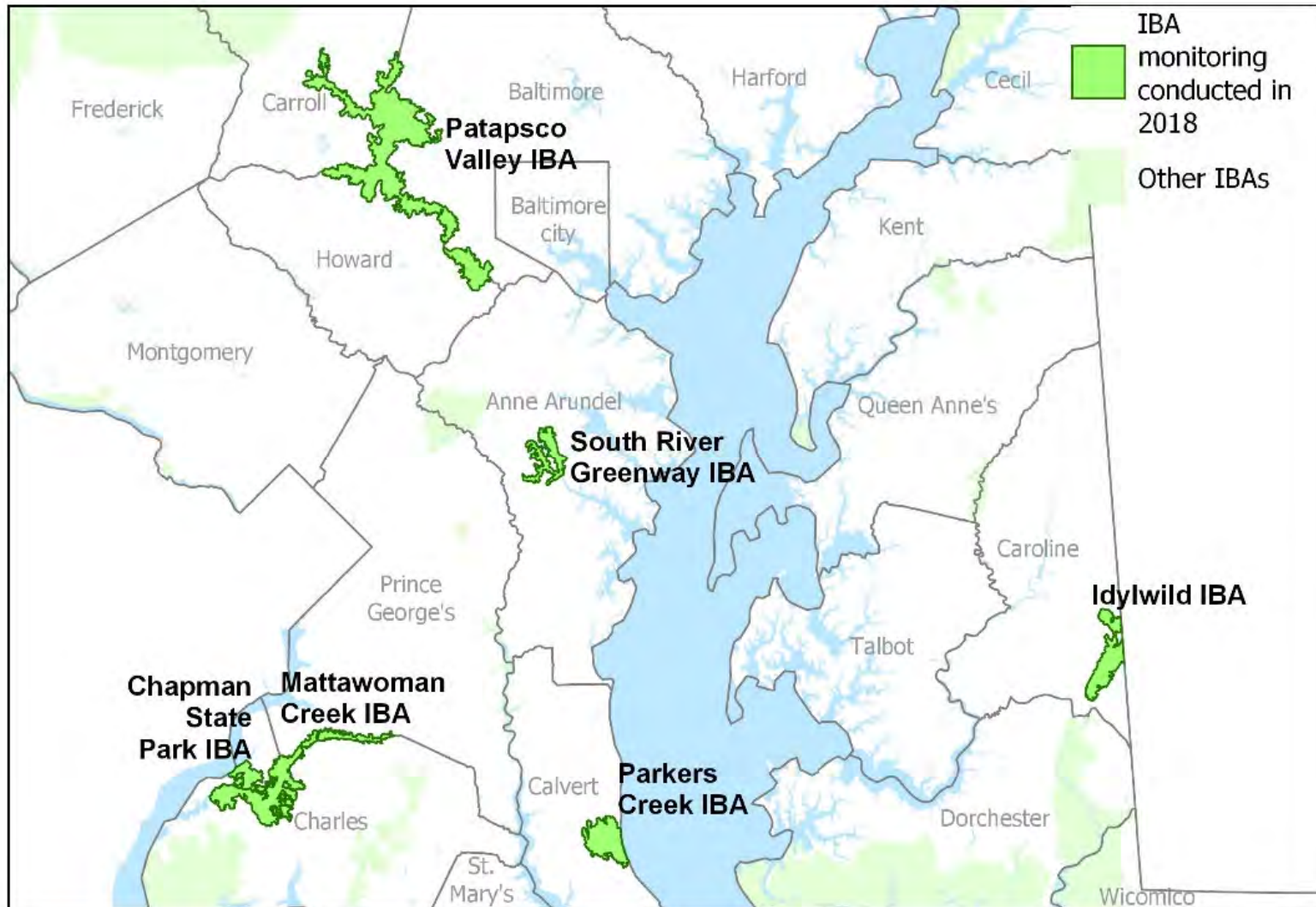
Public recognition and outreach



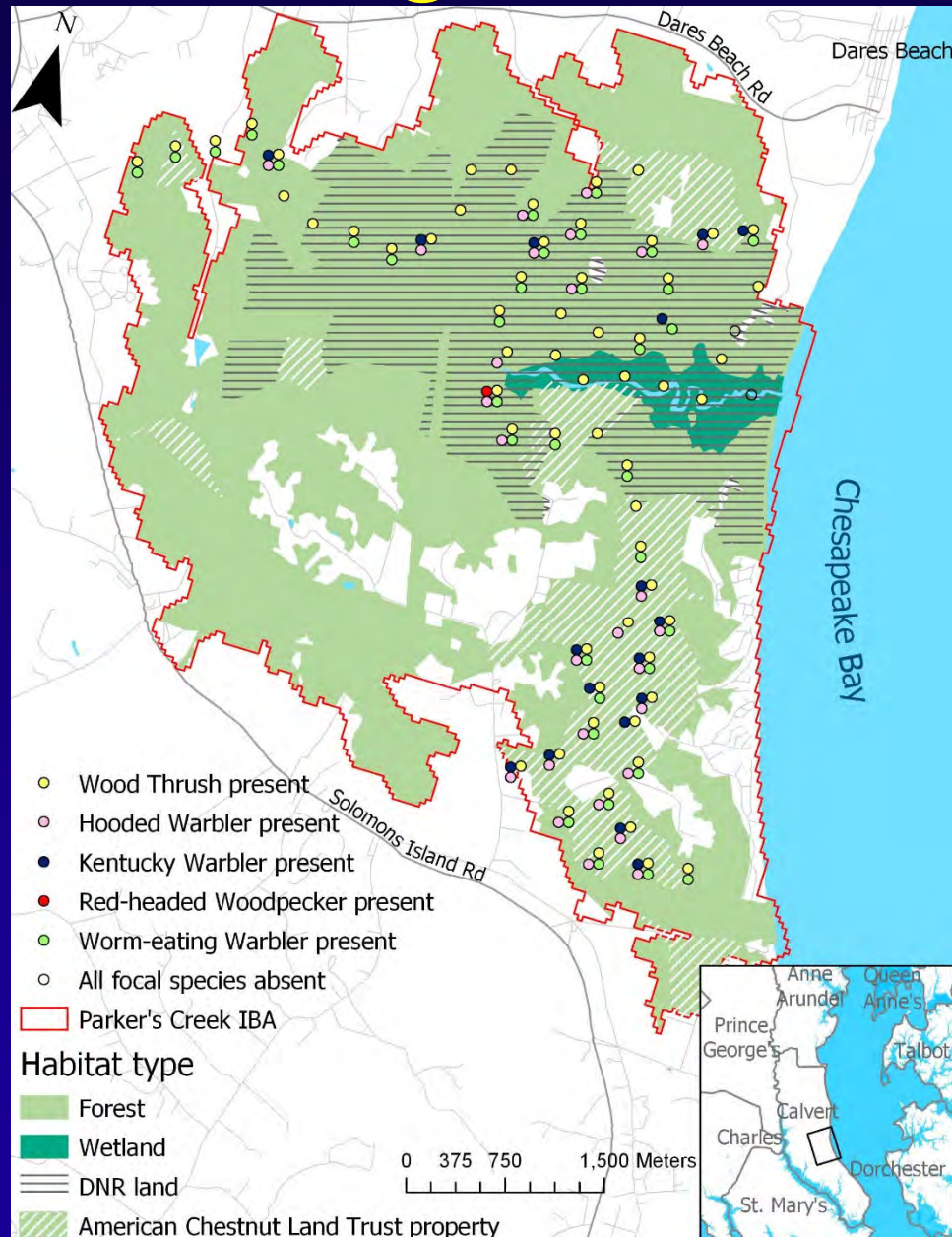
IBA monitoring in partnership with the MBCP

- Why monitor bird species in IBAs?
 - Examine trends in abundance and diversity of bird populations.
 - Bird survey results can be used as an indicator to compare the habitat quality of different IBAs in the same region.
 - Understand gradients of habitat quality within a single IBA in order to inform management decisions.

IBA monitoring locations 2018



IBA monitoring results- example



IBA Champions protect Important Bird Areas

1. **Monitoring:** Volunteers track bird populations.
2. **Stewardship:** Technical expertise and volunteer groups for habitat management
3. **Advocacy:** Bird data and citizen action for land protection

Email Chris Eberly
(director@marylandbirds.org)
to get involved!

