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March/April 2022

ENVIRONMENT

Dredging is for the Birds Tree Swallows: The Blue Acrobats in the Sky

Tree swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) are one of Maryland's earliest migratory birds, well-known for their shiny deep-blue back and white front, and superb aerial acrobatics twists when after yummy insects. The first birds arrive in late February and usually begin nesting in March. They nest in tree cavities or nest boxes. Breeding season usually ends by late July, then the birds begin staging in large numbers along the coast.



Unlike most swallows, which are mostly insectivorous, tree swallows also eat berries to survive the colder months - particularly bayberries along the coast. Although common at all our dredge materials sites, they are most numerous at [Poplar Island](#). Also, thousands of these majestic birds can be observed at [Assateague Island](#) in October - it is quite a spectacle to behold!

Photo: A Tree Swallow at Poplar Island. Photo Credit: Tim Carney/ Maryland Environmental Service (MES)

Port Receives EPA Grant to Reduce Emissions

The Port of Baltimore was awarded a \$1.8 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for their Diesel Equipment Upgrade Program. The grant will help the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA) replace older cargo-handling equipment and dray trucks with more efficient models.

MDOT Deputy Secretary Earl Lewis said the grant was “an important tool in our ongoing efforts to be greener and to advance Maryland’s response to climate change.”



The funds from the Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) will replace four-yard trucks, six forklifts, one mobile welding unit and three heavy-duty dray trucks—the first electric-powered dray trucks to serve the Port.

“This grant funding will support the replacement of cargo handling equipment and dray trucks with cleaner models that will reduce emissions at the Port and surrounding communities,” said EPA Region 3 Administrator Adam Ortiz.

Photo: EPA Region 3 Administrator Adam Ortiz congratulating the POB on receiving the \$1.8M DERA Grant. Photo Credit: Bill McAllen

COMMUNITY

Masonville Cove’s First National Literacy Celebration

Masonville Cove kicked off its inaugural National Literacy Celebration on April 9th. Local children’s author Aja Dorsey Jackson signed copies of her new book, “Plane Jane and the Capital Bee.” Then families enjoyed an entertaining and informative planting demonstration with U. S. Fish & Wildlife biologist, Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter, followed by a themed make-and-take activity. The books were purchased and donated by the [Harbor City Links](#).



“Working for the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition during Masonville Cove’s early restoration period, I spent a lot of time writing about the Cove and following its progression,” said Ms. Dorsey. “Being able to come back now as an author and share my words with the community in a different way and to see Masonville Cove where it is today feels like a full-circle moment and is incredibly special to me.”

Photo: Aja Dorsey Jackson signs copies of her new book, “Plane Jane and the Capital Bee” at the inaugural National Literacy Celebration at Masonville Cove. Photo Credit: Katrina Jones

Celebrate Trails Day 2022 Held at Masonville Cove!

Masonville Cove was honored to be one of the host sites for this year's "National Celebrate Trails Day", April 23rd. Celebrate Trails Day is an annual spring celebration of America's trails created by [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#) (RTC) in 2013. This national event is hosted on the fourth Saturday of April to raise awareness and encourage people across the country to enjoy our nation's beautiful trails and trail systems. There are approximately three miles of trails at Masonville Cove.

[Nature Worx](#) led a great mindful walk at Masonville Cove with 10 adults and four children that participated in a peaceful saunter down to the shoreline and around the vernal pool. These guided walks help participants get in tune with nature around them for a more relaxing experience. The trails at Masonville Cove are open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The next free mindful walk with Nature WoRx (register [here](#)) will be held June 2nd at 5:30 p.m. OR enjoy an opportunity for a fun, self-guided trail scavenger hunt to win a prize (no registration required). This is a free family friendly experience.



Photo: Participants visit shoreline at Masonville Cove during Celebration Trails Day 2022. Photo Credit: Courtesy Nature Worx

OUTREACH

U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland visit to Masonville Cove

There were some very special guests visiting Masonville Cove! [Department of the Interior](#) Secretary Deb Haaland visited Masonville Cove on March 11th as part of her Northeast tour to discuss investments in infrastructure resilience and ecosystem restoration. At the beginning of the visit, a tribal land acknowledgement was given recognizing the site as the ancestral lands of the Delaware Nation of Oklahoma, home to members of the Delaware, Piscataway, Nanticoke, and Susquehannock tribes, and that they were the first stewards and biologists here.



During the visit, Secretary Haaland and [Baltimore](#) Mayor Brandon Scott met [Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove](#) students and participated in water testing and shoreline cleanup. They also had an opportunity to see the nesting bald eagle pair, learn about the false blue indigo greenhouse project, and community engagement in South Baltimore.

Photo: Secretary Deb Haaland. Photo Credit: Bill McAllen



Photo: Secretary Deb Haaland's visit to Masonville Cove and Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove students on May 11, 2022. Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office.

Recycled Christmas Trees Breathe New Life into Communities across the Bay

Recycled Christmas trees are breathing new life into communities across the Bay. On [Poplar Island](#), the trees have been repurposed as habitat for native wildlife such as the American black duck. Animals in the upper Bay's Plumpton Park Zoo snack on their tasty evergreen branches. And there are countless community tree recycling programs that grind donated Christmas trees into nutrient-rich mulch for local gardens, parks, and landscaping.

With so many beneficial uses, there are plenty of ways for old Christmas trees to find new life. Look into tree recycling programs in your community before the holiday season begins to get the facts and plan ahead. By putting those trees to work after the holidays are over, you can avoid waste while benefiting Bay communities. Visit [realchristmastrees.org](#) to search for Christmas tree recycling programs near you.



Photo: A Red-winged Blackbird sits atop a recycled Christmas Tree at Poplar Island. Photo Credit: Ryland Taylor/MES

UPCOMING EVENTS

These committee meetings are open to the public. Some meetings may be virtual or in-person in accordance with COVID protocols. Please visit [maryland-dmmp.com](#) for details and access information for each meeting.

Joint Citizens Advisory Committee/Harbor Team Meeting - May 11th at 5:30 PM

For more information, visit [maryland-dmmp.com](#)
For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee Meeting - May 25th at 5:30 PM

For more information, visit [maryland-dmmp.com](#)
For questions, ecoport@marylandports.com.

Masonville Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting - June 14th at 5:30 PM

For more information, visit [maryland-dmmp.com](#)
For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

Management Committee Meeting - June 22 at 10:00 AM

For more information, visit [maryland-dmmp.com](#)
For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

[MDOT MPA Website](#)

[Port of Baltimore Magazine](#)

[Environment Website](#)

ECO Port Newsletter is the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration's bi-monthly update of projects and programs that help the agency contribute to a thriving economy, environmental stewardship, and community partnerships. As always, we thank the many private sector businesses, government leaders, communities, and individual citizens who have helped make these achievements a reality.



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