



## *Patuxent Science Meeting 2004 Poster Abstract*

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### **Poplar Island Restoration: Waterbird Mecca or Mess?**

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Poplar Island is an 1100-acre island near Tilghman Island, Maryland created as a dredged material containment - Beneficial Use Project by the US Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Port Administration. Construction began in 1999, and most of the cells, dikes, and small nesting islands created for waterbirds were completed by 2001. From 2001 through 2003, 12 species of waterbirds nested on the island including two shorebirds, Killdeer and Willet, and an aquatic raptor, the Osprey. Waterbirds that were identified as priority species that nested in increasing numbers over the past 3 years include Common and Least Terns and Ospreys. Small numbers of Snowy and Cattle Egrets nested in 2002, but not in 2003. Several species of "undesirable species" also colonized the site especially since 2002, including Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, Canada Geese, and Mute Swans. Some bird control has been implemented by USDA biologists on gulls, geese and swans in 2003, given the potential harm they could do. The rapid growth in nesting populations of Common and Least Terns in just 2 years was very encouraging, as these species are of high priority to Maryland. In fact, this site may represent nearly the entire Chesapeake Bay (Maryland portion) population of Common Terns. However, we recorded near-total failure of both species of terns in 2003, presumably associated with record rainfall in spring-summer. Additional monitoring of reproduction is required to ensure that the site does not become a population "sink" for the desired species.