

Poplar Island Restoration: Waterbird Mecca or Mess?

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History of Poplar Island Environmental Restoration Project

- Cooperative project between US Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Port Administration
- Beneficial Use Project – initiated in 1992
- 1100 acres to restore the original 1880s “footprint” of Poplar Island that had diminished to < 5 acres by 1995
- Monitoring and planning coordinated by Maryland Environmental Services; technical representation by MD DNR, MD Geol. Survey, MDE, NOAA, USFWS, USGS, University of MD...



Photo by Rob Bennetts



Wildlife Goals of PIERP

- Provide nesting habitat for Common and Least Terns, Ospreys, American Black Ducks, herons, egrets, American Oystercatchers
- Provide feeding habitat for migrant shorebirds and wintering waterfowl and shorebirds
- Provide roosting habitat for all migrant birds
- Provide nesting habitat for Diamondback Terrapins

Management Requirements for Target Species

- In wetland cells, construct sand/shell islands for nesting terns, oystercatchers; keep vegetation sparse or absent
- In developed wetlands, plant low shrubs to attract nesting Black Ducks
- On uplands, plant trees and shrubs to attract nesting herons, egrets, ducks, songbirds
- Prevent raccoon, fox invasion and reduce bird predators (crows, gulls)
- Provide some sand substrate on perimeter for nesting terrapins

Table 1. Estimated number of nests for “desirable” bird species (2001-2003) at Poplar Island.

Species	2001	2002	2003
Common Tern	398	340-400	827
Least Tern	35-40	40	62
Osprey	yes	5	6
Snowy Egret	0	>40	0
Cattle Egret	0	1?	0

Table 2. Estimated number of nests for “undesirable” bird species (2001-2003) at Poplar Island.

Species	2001	2002	2003
Double Crested Cormorant	0	80-90	405
Canada Goose	?	>20	5-10
Great Black-backed Gull	?	>25	5+
Herring Gull	?	>300	190
Mute Swan	2	3	removed

Summary

- Good habitat constructed and/or maintained for target bird species: Common and Least Tern, Osprey, egrets. Need to confirm successful breeding.
- Future wetland cell development should attract American Black Ducks, other rails, shorebirds, waders.
- Reestablishment of site by Mute Swans, Cormorants, invasion by Canada Geese, Herring and Gr. Black-backed Gulls
- We recommend continued control of swans, attempt to reduce numbers of nesting gulls, using harassment and/or egg removal/oiling.