



BIRDING CAMBRIDGE AND BLACKWATER NWR
by Lorraine Logan, Sussex Bird Club

If you are looking for a new area to bird on the Delmarva Peninsula, why not try Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and the Cambridge waterfront. Blackwater is a great area any time of year and Cambridge can be hard to beat during the winter months, December through February, when waterfowl are diverse and plentiful. This review is written targeting the winter months.

Starting the trip on Route 50 in Cambridge, turn west on Maryland Avenue, the first intersection south of the Choptank River Bridge. Follow Maryland Avenue across Cambridge Creek, bear right, then take a right again onto High Street. Follow it to its end at Long Wharf. There's a large parking lot so you can drive right up to the Choptank River and look for ducks, often long-tailed ducks, scaup, scoters, bufflehead, Canvasbacks (below) sometimes accompanied by an occasional Redhead (above), cormorants, and lots of gulls. As you drive past the boat basin, check the water around the docked boats. Over the years there have been exciting rarities found in these waters.

Turn right onto Water St, take the next right into the Yacht Club area. You can drive into the first parking lot and check out the more protected water, then back to Water St and another right onto Oakley St. which deadends at the river. Expect to find a huge flock of canvasback with scaup, wigeon and redheads in the mix. Water St. becomes Hambrooks Blvd. somewhere in this area. Make a right onto Somerset Ave. which will take you to a public park and the chance for more canvasbacks, buffleheads, scoters, and golden-eyes. Continue on Hambrooks Blvd, passing Pink's Pond on the left and the river on the right, a good spot for tundra swan. Turn around and head back to Rt. 50, take a right and follow Rt. 50 through several lights to the intersection at Rt. 16. There's a shopping center on the

right containing Wal-mart, and The Hyatt Resort on the left.

Now you're on your way to Blackwater. Turn right and follow Rt. 16 approximately 8 miles to the small town of Church Creek. As you drive, watch the telephone wires for kestrel and the fields for Canada geese, snow geese and tundra swan. At Church Creek turn left at the fire station onto Rt. 335. Make another left onto Key Wallace Drive and you are in the refuge. Watch for the abundant bald eagles in the sky and Delmarva fox squirrels on the ground. It's worth a stop at the recently remodeled Visitor's Center to check the log for recent sightings, the bird feeders in the back, the outstanding gift shop, and to obtain walking trail maps.

Follow Key Wallace Dr. to the entrance to Blackwater's wildlife drive. The first few miles of the drive are more heavily forested and are great for woodpeckers and brown-headed nuthatches. Take the marsh trail, a short walk and often quite birdy. As the drive opens up, with the Blackwater River on the left and small ponds on the right, look for common and red-breasted mergansers, teal and pintails. During the past few winters there has been a small flock of white pelicans often seen along the last section of the drive. Blackwater usually hosts a golden eagle over the winter so be on the lookout for it as well.

The end of the drive brings you out on Rt. 16, so turn right and follow it back to Rt. 50. Have a good trip!! First photo of Redhead by Bill Fintel. Second photo of Canvasbacks by Chris Bennett.

