



DREDGED
MATERIAL
MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM

Maryland Port Administration

Birding Tour Safety Guidelines

Making the Most of your MPA Birding Tour

Thank you in advance for reading this document to ensure enjoyable and successful Birding Tours for all participants. Site specific information can be found at the end of the document.

Registration

The group size is limited by the boat, bus, and tour guide capacity, so only those pre-registered will be allowed to join a tour. The primary registrant is in charge of ensuring that your group follows the rules.

Prior to the Tour

If you are experiencing any symptoms such as cough, fever, loss of taste, or shortness of breath on the morning of the tour, please stay home. In this case, please alert our team that you will not be able to join us by emailing birdingtours@menv.com.

Arrival

To ensure you don't miss the bus or boat, please arrive 10-15 mins prior to check-in and for a safety briefing.

What to Bring

We recommend bringing telescopes, binoculars, water, cameras, and sun and bug protection. The tour does not include a designated lunch break but participants are welcome to bring snacks. For your safety, please wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes.

Terrain

Participants must be prepared to board a boat or bus, climb a few steps, and walk relatively long distances on unpaved roads with rock, gravel, or mud with the potential of crossing shallow water. Birding Tours require the ability to walk on these uneven surfaces. Because the walk may traverse several miles of bumpy terrain, open-toed shoes, sandals, or thin-soled sneakers are not permitted. High visibility vests (provided) must be worn at all times both inside and outside of the vehicle. For tours that require site access by boat, all participants are required to wear a life jacket (provided) while on the boat.

Site Rules

- Birding Tour participants must obey signage and verbal notices.
- Maryland Port Administration Dredged Material Containment Facilities are construction zones, and your safety is our number one priority. Some areas of the site might have public access restrictions, which we ask participants to respect. Participants will not be allowed in areas designated as active construction zones.
- The tour group must stay together at all times.
- MPA Birding Tours are family-friendly events; we ask participants to respect others on the tour.
- Please help us keep the tour areas beautiful by not littering, and by leaving nature where you find it.
- We ask tour participants to not collect plants or animals, either alive or dead (they're still important for the ecosystem).

The Following Are Not Permitted:

- Smoking
- Fires
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Weapons
- Illegal activities
- Swimming/ wading
- Skateboarding/ skating
- ATVs, bicycles, or horses
- Motorized boats
- Digging
- Pets other than trained service animals (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act)

We ask that all visitors follow our site rules in order to ensure that Maryland Port Administration sites remain safe and protected for our resident wildlife and other visitors enjoying the site.

Site-Specific Rules

Cox Creek

The Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF) is an active construction site. There will be public access restrictions for some areas of this site including that participants will not be allowed in areas designated as active construction zones. Additionally, while the wetlands are always open during tours, it is possible that access to the DMCF may be denied if conditions are too muddy.

Sturdy footwear is essential (no open-toe shoes, no thin-soled sneakers) and participants will likely need to cross moving water at the “riffle” in the wetlands. Depending on areas visited, Cox Creek tours will include walking on approximately 3–4 miles of flat roads/paths with a few small hills.

Hart-Miller Island

Upon arrival at the land base, the group will board a boat for the tour, which is approximately a 15-minute boat ride to and from the island. Once onsite, participants will be taken to various birding stops via bus.

Poplar Island

Birding Tours depart the Tilghman Island Maryland Environmental Science land base promptly at the event start time. If you are late, alternative boat transportation to dock on Poplar Island is not allowed. For your convenience, a portable toilet is available at the land base. At the indicated event end time, the tour group is scheduled to return to Tilghman Island.

Poplar Island is an active construction site. All guests are expected to be respectful to the site and other participants; unruly behavior will not be tolerated. The group coordinator will be held responsible for informing members of the group of the following safety regulations:

1. Poplar Island is open to the public through prior arrangement only.
2. All participants are required to wear a life jacket while on the boat (provided). Visitors under 50 lbs. must provide their own life jackets.
3. Tour boats have a strict 24-passenger limit. If your group exceeds this number, we reserve the right to deny any unscheduled visitors.

We ask that you notify the Poplar Island staff as soon as possible if you are not bringing your scheduled amount of participants. In order for tours to take place, they require a minimum of 12 participants to ensure efficiency. The tour will be canceled if the minimum number of participants are not present the morning of the tour.

Please consider the following before the Birding Tour:

1. Closed-toed shoes with appropriate soles such as sneakers or hiking shoes/boots are required. Failure to wear closed-toed shoes will result in getting turned away at the dock.
2. Tours run rain or shine. However, the tour may be canceled in the event of severe weather. Please note that the island weather can be more severe than on the mainland, is unpredictable, and can change quickly.
3. Tours can be enjoyed by people of all ages, but keep in mind that some of the topics covered may be advanced for younger visitors.

Directions to the Poplar Island Land base from points west:

21548 Chicken Point Road, Tilghman, MD 21671

1. Take Rt. 50 East toward Ocean City
2. Exit onto Rt. 322 just after the Easton Airport
3. Take Rt. 322 approximately 2 miles to Rt. 33
4. Take a right on Rt. 33 West
5. Follow Rt. 33 for about 22 miles, through St. Michaels and then over the Knapps Narrows Bridge onto Tilghman Island.
6. Keep going straight and take the first street on your left called CHICKEN POINT RD . Our land base office is the third house on the left. The map below shows an aerial view of the area and the new land base is indicated with a red mark.
7. The house number is 21548. You will see a big parking lot by the house and please park in marked spots if possible.
8. Follow the path from the parking lot to the pier. A big boat called the Terrapin will be there to pick your group up at the predetermined pickup time. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to call Poplar Island's main telephone number at: (410) 770-6500.