JUG BAY, ANNE ARUNDEL & PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTIES, MD

The magnificent wild rice marshes of Jug Bay draw both human and wildlife visitors to this Natural Area in summer and fall. Their graceful flowering heads produce food for waterfowl, and the marshes are a haven for numerous other birds, including rails, egrets, herons and the rare American bittern *(Botaurus lentiginosus)*. A portion of the Patuxent River Trail runs through the tidal freshwater marshes at Jug Bay. Summer visitors can enjoy the colorful display of pickerel-weed's purple flowers and yellow pond-lily's cup-shaped blooms bordering open water with acres of wild rice in the background. Boardwalks along the marsh edge invite visitors into the tidal shrublands and swamp forest that lie in the transition between steep upland slopes and open marsh. Trails in the upland woods cross through unusually dry, sandy forest that supports rare plants adapted to the droughty, low-nutrient soils. Pockets of wet woods contain vernal pools that fill with water in the fall and winter and dry in late spring and summer. Because they lack fish predators, these seasonal pools are vital breeding sites for amphibians. In the fall, a mass migration of marbled salamanders has been well documented traveling from the upland forest to the vernal pools to lay their eggs.

KATHI FACHET

KEY ELEMENTS

- Vernal Pools
- American Bittern
- Eastern Box Turtle
- Tidal Hardwood Swamp
- Wild Rice Freshwater Marsh

HANS STIEGLITZ / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The American bittern's remarkable camouflage helps it to blend in with its surroundings. In spring its loud, booming calls can sometimes be heard at dawn and dusk.

THE BASICS

- Entry Fee (waived for members)
- Multiple Trails
- Interpretive Programs
- Canoe/Kayak Access Areas
- Visitor Center and Facilities

Much of Jug Bay Natural Area is part of the Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary which encompasses over 1,500 acres of protected land. The Sanctuary is operated by the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks. Due to its status as a sanctuary, much of the Natural Area is only open to the public a few days a week. The Sanctuary is an estuarine site within the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Maryland (CBNERR-MD), a research and education program administered in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Anne Arundel County. Among other issues, researchers are studying the effects of climate change, including changes in salinity, on the fragile tidal marshes. The water trail is managed jointly by DNR and county agencies.

CLAIRE HOUCK / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

R.H. WIEGAND

Yellow pond-lily (left) is found on calm, shallow waters and provides both food and shelter for fish and other wildlife. Pickerelweed's (right) tubular flowers attract several pollinators. This wetland plant efficiently filters out many water pollutants.

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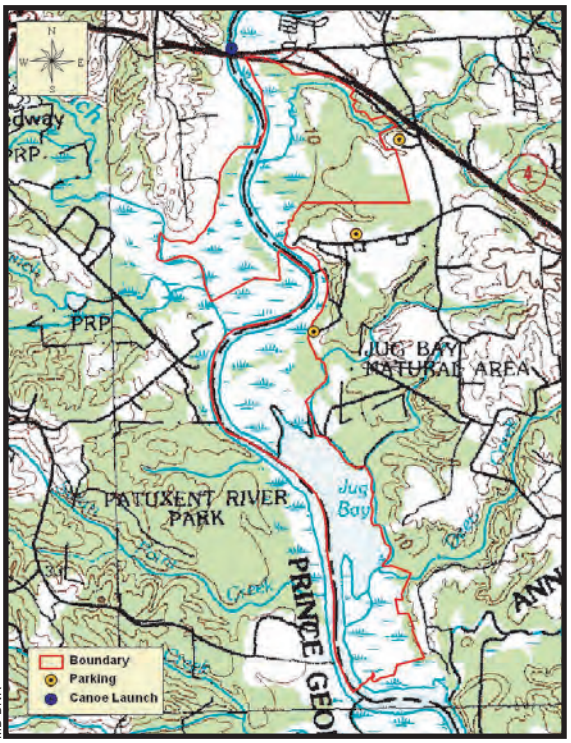

MD DNR

Jug Bay Natural Area

Directions

From Washington, DC: Travel I-95/495 (Capital Beltway) to Exit 11 and head east/south on MD 4 about 10.5 miles to the exit for Plummer Lane. Exit right at Plummer Lane and proceed 0.5 mile to Wrighton Road. Turn right on Wrighton Road and continue about 0.6 mile to the Sanctuary entrance on the left. Follow the gravel drive about 0.6 mile to the Wetlands Center parking area.

A detailed map of the Jug Bay Natural Area with access sites for trails, parking and paddling can be found at:

http://jugbay.org/visit_us/Trail%20Maps

Special Note: *Jug Bay Natural Area is used seasonally by hunters.*

WATCH OUT FOR!

- Slippery Boardwalks
- Ticks and Mosquitoes

CONTACT

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary
1361 Wrighton Road
Lothian, MD 20711
P: 410-741-9330

For more information:
www.jugbay.org

KERRY WIXTED

Marbled Migration

Marbled salamanders spend much of their time underground. However, on rainy nights in September, hundreds of these chunky salamanders migrate to vernal pools to court and mate. After mating, the females will lay a mass of up to 200 eggs in the often dry vernal pool. When the pool fills with water, the eggs will hatch and larvae will develop. This reproductive strategy is very different from other salamanders which generally breed in the spring.

Left: Marbled salamanders are usually solitary creatures and stay well hidden underground until the breeding season.

Out of the Box

The eastern box turtle is one of two species of box turtles found in the United States. These long-lived reptiles have a brightly patterned, dome-shaped shell, and are often found among the leaf litter throughout the woods at Jug Bay. Habitat loss and vehicular strikes while crossing roads have led to a significant decline in Maryland's box turtle population. In response, wildlife officials have placed the turtle on the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Since 1995, Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary staff and volunteers have tagged and released over 500 eastern box turtles within the Sanctuary. When a tagged turtle is found, data is then collected and studied. This ongoing research has led to a better overall understanding of the box turtle's habitats and home range.

KERRY WIXTED

Eastern box turtles have a specially hinged bottom shell (called a plastron) which allows them to fully retract their head, limbs and tail within their shell.