

# WATER TRAILS IN ST. MARY'S COUNTY

## Explore the Trails of the Tidal Potomac

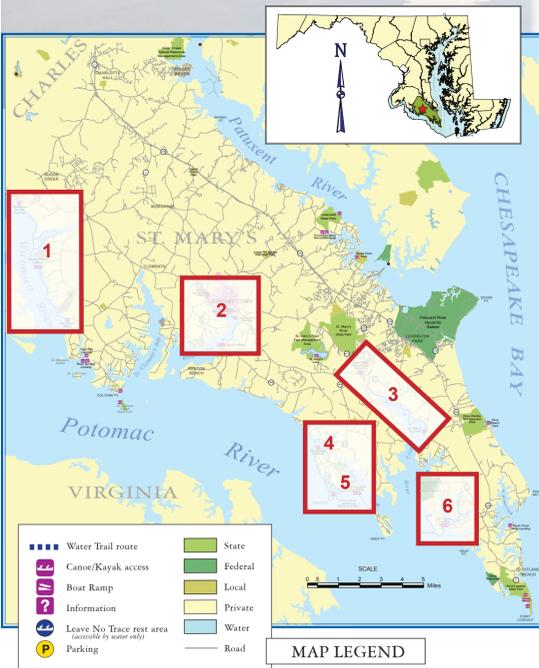
This St. Mary's County Water Trails guide features six water trails located on the western side of the St. Mary's peninsula, along the lower, tidal Potomac River. The trails range from short day trips to longer routes that can be linked for multi-day journeys. There are options for paddlers of all skill levels. Some of the trail routes are in protected areas with moderate wind and current conditions and are best for novices and families. Other trails, such as those that traverse the open waters of the Potomac River, provide more challenging paddling conditions suitable for experienced paddlers.

These trails provide visitors with a chance to see and explore the beauties of Southern Maryland and the St. Mary's peninsula by water. Opportunities for fishing, wildlife observation, and exploring the Lower Potomac River and its many tributaries abound.

All of the water trails in this guide are part of a larger statewide network of water trails including the Potomac River Water Trail, which is a Maryland designated water trail that includes the Lower Potomac River from Washington, D.C. to the Chesapeake Bay. For more information, visit [www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/mdwatertrails](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/mdwatertrails).

Whatever your level of paddling expertise, remember to plan ahead for your journey, follow the paddling safety tips listed on the other side of this map, and always wear your life jacket. The trails included in this guide are listed and identified on the index map below.

- 1 Wicomico River Trail: Wicomico Shores Landing to Bushwood Wharf
- 2 McIntosh Run Trail: Port of Leonardtown Park to Abell's Wharf
- 3 Upper St. Mary's River Trail: Great Mills Launch to St. Mary's City
- 4 Herring Creek Loop Trail: Tall Timbers Landing and Herring Creek
- 5 Piney Point Creek Trail: Piney Pt. Lighthouse Museum and Park Loop Trail
- 6 St. Ingoes Trails: St. Ingoes Landing, Smith Creek, Jutland Creek, Kitts Point



This map of St. Mary's County Water Trails is intended for use primarily by non-motorized boaters, although powered watercraft utilize the numerous access facilities identified along the water trail routes. Note that all the access points differ with regard to the type of craft that can be launched. Most access points can accommodate a variety of recreational boats but some sites are specifically geared for human powered craft such as canoes and kayaks.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This map is meant to be used as a reference for existing public access sites and facilities. We strongly recommend using more detailed maps, charts and supplemental information geared to your specific needs when planning for or undertaking extended excursions.

### St. Mary's County Public Landing Regulations

**Public Landing Fees and Permits:** There are no fees or parking permit requirements to use the County's public landings. Please adhere to the following landing regulations:

- Landings are closed between sunset and sunrise; with the exception of loading and unloading boats
- Do not block ramps, parked vehicles, bulkheads or access to piers
- Overnight parking, camping, night fishing or open fires are not allowed
- Obey "No Fishing or Crabbing" signs where posted
- Do not leave boats or equipment at landing
- Do not leave residential trash in trash cans
- No alcohol consumption at landings
- No glass bottles or containers; no littering
- Those fishing and crabbing need to move fishing and crabbing lines as boaters use the boat ramps.
- All public landings are trash free. You must take home what you bring with you.
- Launching at landings without a ramp is limited to canoes, kayaks, and car-top boats.

For additional information about public landings contact the **St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks** at 301-863-8400 ext. 3570 or visit [www.co.saint-marys.md.us/recreate/facilities/publiclandings.asp](http://www.co.saint-marys.md.us/recreate/facilities/publiclandings.asp)

### 1 Wicomico River Trail: Wicomico Shores Landing to Bushwood Wharf

**Distance:** It is approximately 5 miles one-way from Wicomico Shores Landing to Chaptico Wharf and approximately 3 miles one-way from Chaptico Wharf to Bushwood Wharf. More adventurous paddlers can attempt the entire 8-mile distance.  
**Difficulty:** Appropriate for intermediate to experienced paddlers - can be easy to moderate depending on wind conditions. Remain alert to powerboat traffic and be mindful of weather conditions and tides which can make any journey more challenging. Longer distances and open water should only be attempted by experienced paddlers.  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks manages all of the access points along this trail.

This trail gives paddlers the opportunity to explore the coves and creeks around Budd's Creek, Chaptico and Bushwood. Depart from Wicomico Shores Landing and paddle south along the western shoreline of St. Mary's County. This area is developed along the shore but gradually becomes more rural further south. Approximately 2.5 miles along the trail you will pass Cohouck Point. Head east (to the left) into Chaptico Bay (about 2 miles in length, depending on tides) to explore quiet tidal marshes and see abundant wildlife. Leaving Chaptico Bay along the southern shoreline, you will pass Mill Point, a small waterfront development. Chaptico Wharf is a good rest stop or take-out point only one-mile from Mill Point. The best landing spot at Chaptico Wharf is a small sandy spot immediately to the right of the pier.

Further south are picturesque and unspoiled Manahowick and Bramleigh Creeks. Beyond Bramleigh Creek is a length of low cliffs where a beach may be present at low tide. The "cliffs" end at the inlet to Bramleigh Creek. This is a backwater that can be explored in under an hour. It is picturesque, unspoiled, and full of birds and aquatic life. Be mindful that all the shoreline here is privately owned. Paddlers will pass the waterfront side of Longview Beach, a resort community built by and for African Americans in the 1950's. About .4 miles from this community you will come around White Point and see the large cove where Bushwood Wharf is located.

#### Wicomico Shores Landing

**GPS:** 38 22' 47.41" N 76 51' 22.14" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Amenities:** Boat ramp, piers, picnic shelter and tables, small playground. Restroom building open April 1 through mid-October. Riverview Restaurant at Wicomico Shores Golf Course is nearby and serves lunch and dinner (hours of operation vary depending on the season); also has restrooms. Parking lot with 20 parking spaces and room for trailers.  
**Directions:** Drive south on Route 5 through Charlotte Hall. Turn right onto Route 236 toward Budds Creek. Turn left onto Route 234 then turn right onto Aviation Yacht Club Road and continue to the end. Turn right onto Army Navy Drive and drive to the end. Address: 35222 Army Navy Drive, Chaptico, MD 20621

#### Chaptico Wharf Landing and Recreation Area

**GPS:** 38 19' 34.80" N 76 49' 57.40" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Amenities:** Boat ramp, pier, seasonal portable toilet and picnic tables. Parking lot with 15 parking spaces and room for trailers.  
**Directions:** Drive south on Route 5 through Charlotte Hall. Turn right onto Route 236 toward Budds Creek. Turn left onto Route 234. Turn right onto Route 238 and turn left onto Chaptico Wharf Road. Address: 23975 Old Chaptico Wharf Road, Maddox, MD 20621

### 2 McIntosh Run Trail: Port of Leonardtown Park to Abell's Wharf

**Distance:** Following along the shoreline, it is approximately 2.4 miles from the Port of Leonardtown Park to Leonardtown Wharf Public Park, .6 miles from Leonardtown Wharf Public Park to Camp Calvert, and 3 miles from Camp Calvert to Abell's Wharf. More experienced paddlers may paddle the full distance of approximately 6 miles.  
**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate along McIntosh Run, but can be difficult in wider waters along lower Breton Bay depending on wind and weather conditions.

This trail features four access points and provides paddlers with the opportunity to explore the quiet marshes of Leonardtown or the open waters of Breton Bay. The upper section of this route is ideal for novice paddlers. Begin at the Port of Leonardtown Park on McIntosh Run, which features a passive park and the newly opened Port of Leonardtown Winery. Head south along McIntosh Run for approximately 2 miles. The trail here meanders through a sheltering canopy of trees which is home to Bald Eagles, Baltimore Orioles, wild turkeys and other bird species. The trail opens up at Breton Bay and large marsh areas will be visible to the right along with a few large waterfront homes. Continue paddling for approximately another half mile. More marshes and duck blinds hidden among the cattails can be seen to the right. The Leonardtown Wharf Public Park will be on the left side.

More experienced paddlers may take a more challenging route by continuing to Camp Calvert Landing and the larger waters of Breton Bay to Abell's Wharf.

#### Port of Leonardtown Park

**GPS:** 38 18' 14.31" N 76 39' 23.72" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** Commissioners of Leonardtown, (301) 475-9791  
**Amenities:** Handicap accessible, soft launch for canoes and kayaks only. Kayak/canoe rentals are available.  
**Directions:** Drive south on Route 5 toward Leonardtown. Turn right at Newtowne Neck Road / Route 243. Turn left at the Port of Leonardtown Winery sign (approximately 0.16 miles) and drive to the end of the road. Address: 23190 Newtowne Neck Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650

#### Leonardtown Wharf Public Park

**GPS:** 38 17' 09.62" N 76 38' 17.37" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** Commissioners of Leonardtown, (301) 475-9791



#### Bushwood Wharf (Robert E. Pogue Memorial Park)

**GPS:** 38 16' 59.29" N 76 48' 18.71" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Amenities:** Boat ramp, pier and seasonal portable toilet. Canoes and kayaks should launch from the beach near the pier. Parking lot has 15 parking spaces and room for trailers with paved and unpaved areas.  
**Directions:** Drive south on Route 5 through Charlotte Hall. Turn right onto Route 236 toward Budds Creek. Continue approximately 6.3 miles on Route 236. Turn left onto Route 234 and continue about 8.2 miles. Turn right onto Route 242 and continue about 3.6 miles. Turn right onto Bushwood Wharf Road and drive to the end. Address: 36803 Bushwood Wharf Road, Bushwood, MD 20618



**Amenities:** Public restrooms, seasonal concession stand and close proximity to restaurants. This site is suitable for canoe and kayak launching only and features a step-down, floating launch platform. Parking is very limited. **Directions:** Drive South on Route 5 toward Leonardtown. Turn right onto Washington Street and drive to the end. Address: 22500 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD 20650

#### Camp Calvert Landing

**GPS:** 38 17' 03.63" N 76 37' 44.41" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks

**Amenities:** This landing is for canoe and kayak access only. Very small parking lot accommodates no more than two vehicles. Parking is minimal so drive to the landing to drop-off kayaks and canoes and park elsewhere. Be cautious of power boats and jet ski traffic when using this landing.  
**Directions:** Drive south on Route 5 toward Leonardtown. Turn right onto Fenwick Street and make a left onto Camp Calvert Road. Drive to the end of Camp Calvert Road. Address: 22530 Camp Calvert Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650

#### Abell's Wharf

**GPS:** 38 15' 38.46" N 76 38' 42.51" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks  
**Amenities:** Boat ramp and pier, parking lot (for 20 cars) and seasonal portable toilet.  
**Directions:** Follow Route 5 south to Route 244 west to Breton Beach Road. Then turn right onto Abell's Wharf Road. Address: 21620 Abell's Wharf Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650

### 3 Upper St. Mary's River Trail: Great Mills Launch to St. Mary's City

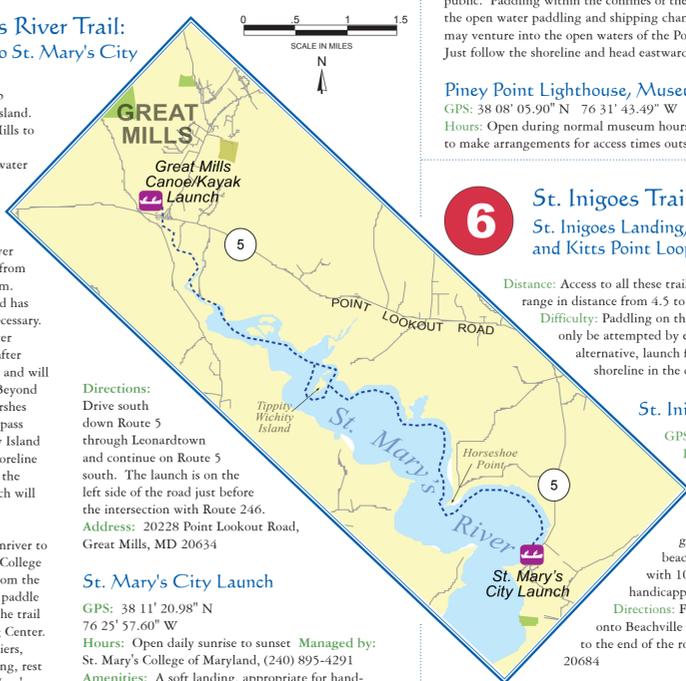
**Distance:** Approximately 6.5 miles roundtrip from Great Mills Launch to Tippy Wichity Island. Approximately 7 miles one-way from Great Mills to St. Mary's City following the shoreline.  
**Difficulty:** Moderate to difficult. Flat calm water dependent on tides and weather.

This trail allows paddlers to experience the sheltered beauty of the headwaters of the St. Mary's River or the more open waters downriver at St. Mary's City. For an easy paddle, launch from Great Mills and head (to the right) downstream. The water here is shallow during dry spells and has sandy areas where a simple portage may be necessary. After rain events use caution: fast moving water and 'strainers' could be encountered. Shortly after launching, the river will pass beneath Route 5 and will remain narrow and shallow for about a mile. Beyond this point, the water will open up to quiet marshes and houses along the shoreline. Paddlers will pass smaller islands prior to seeing Tippy Wichity Island (private property). Stay close to the eastern shoreline before circling the island and heading back to the launch point, or explore Western Branch, which will be on the left when facing the island.

More experienced paddlers may continue downriver to St. Mary's City. The dormitories of St. Mary's College and the spires of Trinity Church can be seen from the water and the route remains relatively easy to paddle unless conditions are windy. The terminus of the trail is at the dock of the St. Mary's College Sailing Center. It is recognizable as a large, open cove, with piers, boathouse, and beach on the left. After paddling, rest along the waterfront or walk to Historic St. Mary's City (see the other side of this guide for details).

#### Great Mills Launch

**GPS:** 38 14' 17.06" N 76 29' 55.78" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks  
**Amenities:** Wooden ramp suitable for canoes or kayaks only. Boats must be carried down the steps to the water. A large paved parking area is located at the top of the ramp. Trailer parking is also available.



**Directions:** Drive south down Route 5 through Leonardtown and continue on Route 5 south. The launch is on the left side of the road just before the intersection with Route 246. Address: 20228 Point Lookout Road, Great Mills, MD 20634

#### St. Mary's City Launch

**GPS:** 38 11' 20.98" N 76 25' 57.60" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's College of Maryland, (240) 895-4291  
**Amenities:** A soft landing, appropriate for hand-launched vessels such as canoes and kayaks only. This very small facility provides access to the water for enjoying nature, fishing or crabbing.  
**Directions:** Drive south down Route 5 to St. Mary's City. Veer right onto Trinity Church Road. The access point is at the sandy beach on the right. For parking, follow Trinity Church Road then turn onto Old State House Road. Turn left onto Route 5 then turn right onto Mill Field Drive. Park in Campus Center parking lot K on the left. Address: 47498 Trinity Church Road, St. Mary's City, MD 20686

### 4 Herring Creek Loop Trail: Tall Timbers Landing and Herring Creek

**Distance:** Approximately 1 - 10 miles depending on route taken  
**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate. Experienced paddlers may continue onto the open waters of the Potomac River. A wide variety of wildlife and beautiful vistas of Herring Creek and the Potomac River can be seen along this trail. Trail conditions and distances will vary depending on which route, creek or coves are explored. Be aware of powerboat traffic at marina openings and small channel crossings.

This trail features approximately 10 miles of shoreline with many finger creeks and tiny coves. Launch at Tall Timbers landing and head to the right. Paddle into the large channel heading toward Route 249 (cars will be visible in the distance). Look into the trees and along the shoreline of this remote section of Herring Creek for nesting herons. Paddle back into the calm waters of the inlets behind Piney Point Elementary School. Turtles, herons and other wildlife are abundant in this area. Follow the shoreline to exit this branch of the creek and head up the creek along the shores and farmlands on the right. There is a marina at the head of the creek. Be cautious - there could be a bit of boat traffic entering and exiting the marina. Continue along the miles of shoreline to the other finger creeks and inlets along the north side of Herring Creek. Paddle through the last finger creek and follow the shoreline to the very open side of Herring Creek. Enjoy the expansive beauty of Herring Creek and the jetties to the Potomac.

#### Tall Timbers Landing

**GPS:** 38 10' 37.90" N 76 32' 49.26" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks  
**Amenities:** Put in is easy at the sandy spot next to pier. **Directions:** Drive south on Route 5 past Leonardtown and turn right onto Piney Point Road / Route 249. Turn right onto Tall Timbers Road then turn right onto Herring Creek Road and drive to the end. Address: 18521 Herring Creek Road, Tall Timbers, MD 20690

### 5 Piney Point Creek Trail: Piney Pt. Lighthouse Museum and Park Loop Trail

**Distance:** It is approximately 5.5 miles to complete Piney Point Creek Loop Trail. It is approximately 4 miles from the Lighthouse Museum and Park to Piney Point Landing, without the loop.  
**Difficulty:** The Creek Loop Trail is easy to moderate in calm weather. Good for beginners and novices. The Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park kayak launch is situated in a small protected lagoon that opens into the larger area of Piney Point Creek. The three coves to the right of the lagoon offer miles of beautiful, marshy, easy to follow shoreline. This area is comprised of private residences and shipping terminal properties and not open to the public. Paddling within the confines of the creek is recommended unless experienced with the open water paddling and shipping channel activity. Paddlers wanting a challenging route may venture into the open waters of the Potomac River and continue to Piney Point Landing. Just follow the shoreline and head eastward.

#### Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park Launch

**GPS:** 38 08' 05.90" N 76 31' 43.49" W **Hours:** Open during normal museum hours or by appointment. For more information or to make arrangements for access times outside of normal operating hours please call the

### 6 St. Ingoes Trails: St. Ingoes Landing, Smith Creek, Jutland Creek and Kitts Point Loop Trails

**Distance:** Access to all these trails starts and ends at St. Ingoes Landing. The trails range in distance from 4.5 to 6.7 miles.  
**Difficulty:** Paddling on the open waters of the lower St. Mary's River should only be attempted by experienced paddlers. For an easy to moderate alternative, launch from St. Ingoes landing and stay close to the shoreline in the calmer waters of Smith Creek and Jutland Creek.

#### St. Ingoes Landing

**GPS:** 38 06' 41.52" N 76 24' 55.31" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks  
**Amenities:** Boat ramp, stairway to the water, seasonal portable toilet, picnic pavilion, tables and grills. Canoes and kayaks can launch from the sandy beach to the right of the boat ramp. Paved parking lot with 10 spaces and enough room for a truck and trailer. One handicapped parking space.  
**Directions:** From St. Mary's City, follow Route 5 south. Turn right onto Beachville Road then turn left into St. Ingoes Landing and follow to the end of the road. Address: 46621 Beachville Road, St. Ingoes, MD 20684

#### Smith Creek Loop Trail: (4.75 miles)

This trail takes paddlers through the shallow waters along the western shoreline of Smith Creek. This peninsula is owned by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and managed as a State Forest. The shoreline features a mix of farm fields, woodlands, and natural areas. Further up the creek there is a "Leave No Trace" rest area along the shoreline and a series of coves which provide habitat for a variety of Chesapeake Bay wildlife. Make a loop at the head of the creek and return to the access point at St. Ingoes Landing.

#### Jutland Creek Loop Trail: (6.75 miles)

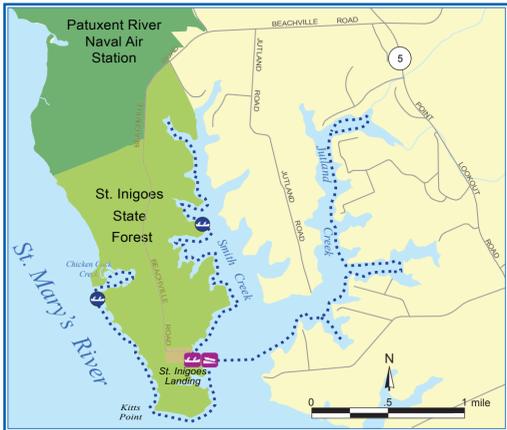
Cruise the shoreline of Jutland Creek and see a variety of wildlife. A shallow basin lies at the far end of the creek where ducks and geese can be spotted raising their young in the spring. The



museum at 301-994-1471 or 301-769-2222.  
**Managed by:** The St. Mary's County Museum Division, Recreation and Parks Department 301-994-1471 - [www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums](http://www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums)  
**Amenities:** Public restrooms, picnic area, gift shop, museum exhibits and tourist information. Parking is limited. Visitors should park on right or left side of Lighthouse Rd. **Directions:** From Leonardtown, take Route 5 south for 8 miles. Turn right onto Piney Point Road / Route 249. Travel another 7 miles to Piney Point, turn right onto Lighthouse Road and follow the road to the end. Kayak launch is located on the right in the first parking area at 44730 Lighthouse Road on Piney Point Creek. Site identification and parking signs will be evident. The sandy beach, which can be used as a soft kayak launch, is located at 44705 Lighthouse Road on the Potomac River.

#### Piney Point Landing and Recreation Area

**GPS:** 38 08' 17.60" N 76 30' 00.78" W **Hours:** Open daily sunrise to sunset  
**Managed by:** St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks  
**Amenities:** This one-acre landing has two 20-foot wide boat ramps, pier, seasonal portable toilet, parking lot for 25 cars with room for trailers and handicapped spaces. Beautiful views of Potomac River and St. George Creek. **Directions:** Follow Route 5 to Piney Point Road / Route 249. The landing is located on the left, before the St. George Island Bridge. Address: 17139 Piney Point Road, Piney Point, MD 20674



loop takes paddlers into Fox Harbor which is home to some of Ridge's charter boat fleet. Private homes, campgrounds, marinas, and restaurants dot the shoreline along this trail. There is active boat traffic along this route so stay close to shore and out of the main channel.

#### Kitts Point Loop Trail: (4.5 miles)

This trail takes paddlers into the open waters of the Potomac and St. Mary's Rivers. If weather conditions are windy novice paddlers should avoid this route, as the open waters can get rough. Depart from the landing and follow the shoreline heading south towards the Potomac River. Keep the shoreline on the right and paddle around Kitts Point (approximately 1 mile) to enter the St. Mary's River. Continue 1 mile north. The shoreline features a series of embayments, sandy beaches and jetties and there is a "Leave No Trace" rest area just before the entrance to Chicken Cack Creek. Explore the creek before making a loop and returning to Kitts Point. The waters around Kitts Point are shallow and on a clear day paddlers might see some underwater wildlife.