

The pages in this document were taken from the "Corsica River Watershed Characterization" published in October 2003. The entire document can be found at [http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/download/bays/cr\\_char.pdf](http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/download/bays/cr_char.pdf).

# Corsica River Watershed Characterization

**Excerpt Showing an Example of How to  
Document Protected Species**

**October 2003**

## Sensitive Species

Sensitive species are generally recognized as being the plants or animals that are most at risk in regards to their ability to maintain healthy population levels. The most widely known are perhaps the State and Federally-listed Endangered or Threatened animals such as the bald eagle and Delmarva fox squirrel. In addition to well known animals such as these however, both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maryland DNR work through their respective Federal and State programs to protect a wide variety of declining non-game animals, rare plants, and the unique natural communities that support them.

For the purposes of watershed restoration, it is valuable to account for the known locations and areas of potential habitat for sensitive species in a given area. They are often indicators, and sometimes important constituents, of the network of natural areas which form the foundation for many essential natural watershed processes. In fact, in addition to conserving biodiversity in general, protecting these species and/or promoting expansion of their habitats can be an effective component for a watershed restoration program.

### 1. Habitat Conservation Measures

DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service identifies important areas for sensitive species conservation in different ways. The geographic delineations most commonly used are described in the text box [Marylands Sensitive Species Conservation Areas](#). As shown in [Map 18 Sensitive Species](#), there are four Ecological Significant Areas (ESAs) identified by the State of Maryland in the Corsica River watershed. The purpose of utilizing these delineations is to help protect sensitive species by identifying the areas in which they are known to occur. Doing so allows DNR to work toward the conservation of these sensitive resources by evaluating potential impacts of proposed actions that may affect them. Specifically, working within an established procedural framework, the Wildlife and Heritage Service reviews projects and provides recommendations for activities falling within these overlays.

The geographic areas covered by these overlays are course filters that allow for uncertainty by incorporating buffers around habitat areas. Accurate on the ground information regarding species locations and habitat delineations for a specific area can be obtained from DNR's Natural Heritage Program. It is also important to note that outside of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, DNR generally only places requirements on projects requiring a permit/approval or utilizing State funds. However, there are more broadly applied State and Federal laws and regulations which address "takings" of listed species. In addition, many counties have incorporated safeguards for areas associated with sensitive species into their project and permit review processes as well as adopting ordinances to protect them. In all instances, property owners are encouraged to seek advice on protecting the sensitive species / habitat within their ownership.

### 2. Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species List

In the Corsica River watershed, the bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* is the only species tracked in Maryland's rare, threatened and endangered species lists. Additionally, at least one colonial waterbird nesting area is found in the watershed. In general, these species are located within area on the Sensitive Species Map labeled as Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).

## **Sensitive Species Protection Areas In the Corsica River Watershed**

### **Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)**

At least four ESAs are identified in the Corsica River watershed as shown in [Map 18 Sensitive Species](#). Each ESA contains one or more sensitive species habitats. However, the entire ESA is not considered sensitive habitat. The ESA is an envelope identified for review purposes to help ensure that applications for permit or approval in or near sensitive areas receive adequate attention and safeguards for the sensitive species / habitat they contain.

### **Natural Heritage Area (NHA)**

No NHAs are located in the Corsica River Watershed. In general, NHAs have been designated as such because they represent rare ecological communities. These are areas which provide important sensitive species habitat. They are designated in State regulation (COMAR 08.03.08.10) and are afforded specific protections in the Critical Area Law criteria. For proposed projects that could potential affect a particular NHA, recommendations and/or requirements may be put in place during the permit or approval process. These would be specifically aimed at protecting the ecological integrity of the NHA itself. To help ensure that proposed projects which may affect a given NHA are adequately reviewed, an ESA is always designated to encompass each NHA and the area surrounding it.

### **Wetlands of Special State Concern (WSSC)**

No WSSCs are designated in the Corsica River Watershed. These selected wetlands, which generally represent the best examples of Maryland's nontidal wetland habitats, are afforded additional protection in state law beyond the permitting requirements that apply to wetlands generally. The Maryland Department of the Environment may be contacted for more information regarding these regulations. To help ensure that proposed projects that may affect a WSSC are adequately reviewed, an ESA is always designated to encompass each WSSC and the area surrounding it. For a listing of designated sites see COMAR 26.23.06.01 at [www.dsd.state.md.us](http://www.dsd.state.md.us)