

# Welcome to TANGIER ISLAND



Welcome to the Tangier History Museum and Interpretive Cultural Center's Water Trails

Paddling through the trails of Tangier Island offers a unique opportunity to explore the marshes, discover wildlife and view the workings of the Chesapeake Bay watermen.

Watercraft, especially small boats, have been and continue to be an integral part of Tangier. Many day-to-day activities are centered around boats and access to the water. To enhance your experience, imagine yourself as a Native American, a thousand years ago, searching for food; as John Smith in 1608

## BIRDS



**BLACK SKIMMER :** (*Rynchops niger*)  
Black above and white below with a black-tipped red-orange bill. Very long-winged, with graceful and buoyant flight. The head is always held lower than the tail. Flies over shallow water, with its lower mandible slicing the water surface foraging for food. Nests in the grassy area of the beach during July & August.



**GREAT BLUE HERON :** (*Ardea herodias*)  
A common permanent resident of the tidewater marshes. The largest heron in North America, it reaches up to 52 inches in length with an average wingspan of 72 inches. Slate blue color. Adult has a black stripe above the eye, black plumes when breeding, yellow bill.



**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT :** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)  
A large black water bird with a long, hook-tipped bill, which tilts upward while swimming. Orange face and chin pouch. Often seen on pilings with wings spread. Has a distinctive kink in the neck while in flight.



**COMMON TERN :** (*Sterna hirundo*)  
A common transient and summer resident. Mid-sized tern with dark wing tips and a black cap. Bill is reddish with black tip. In flight, dark primaries and a forked tail with a dark outer edge. More slender and buoyant than Forster's tern.



**FORSTER'S TERN :** (*Sterna forsteri*)  
A common transient and summer resident. A medium-sized tern with light wing tips. Black cap extends from the top of the bill through the eye to the nape. Bill is orange, tipped with black. Tail is deeply forked with a dark inner edge. Slightly larger than Common tern, with broader wings, thicker bill.



**CLAPPER RAIL :** (*Rallus longirostris*)  
A transient and summer resident. A large gray-brown rail. Long, slightly decurved bill. Cheek and breast are grayish. Flanks are lightly barred. White patch under tail. Length to 16 inches; wingspan averages 20 inches. Nests in cordgrass.



**OSPREY :** (*Pandion haliaetus*)  
Also known as the fish hawk. A common summer resident. Plumage is brownish black from above and white below. Black cheek patch runs from eye to the back of the head. Female has dark stippling of a white breast. Flies with a crook in the wings, hovers and plunges feet first for fish. Length to 25 inches with a 65 inch wingspan. Nests on trees, platforms and buoys.

### OTHER BIRDS YOU MAY SEE INCLUDE:

Pelican, Laughing Gull, Herring Gull, Tri-colored Heron, Green Heron, Yellow-crowned night Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Mallard, White Egret, Snowy Egret, Common Loon, Bufflehead, Pintail, Redhead, Purple Martin, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Northern Harrier, Sandpiper, Sanderling, Dunlin, Yellowlegs, Willet, American Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Belted Kingfisher.

## CRUSTACEANS, MOLLUSKS AND PLANTS



**PERIWINKLE :** (*Littorina irrorata*)  
Grayish to yellowish tan right-handed shell with spiral grooves with reddish flecks on the ridges. Reaches 1 inch in diameter. Climb the stems to escape predation.



**SALTMARSH SNAIL :** (*Melampus bidentatus*)  
Less than 1/2 inch; ascend plants to avoid the tide, since they are strictly air-breathers.



**CORDGRASS :** (*Spartina alterniflora*)  
The salt marshes of the lower bay are dominated by only one or two species of cordgrass. (*Spartina alterniflora*-saltmarsh cordgrass, and *Spartina patens*-saltmeadow cordgrass) Salt marshes are a hostile environment. Few species can survive.



**FIDDLER CRAB :** (*Uca pugnax*)  
A small crab with central eyes situated on long stalks. The male has one large "fiddle" claw and one small claw.

**OTHER INVERTEBRATES & PLANTS YOU MAY SEE INCLUDE:**  
Horseshoe Crab, Blue Claw Crab, Stingrays, Seahorses, Saltmarsh aster, Slender glasswort.

"discovering" "Russel's Isles" as he charted the Chesapeake; as Captain Cockburn of the British Admiralty in 1812 preparing his men on Tangier beach for the attacks on Washington and Baltimore; as a picaroon in the mid-late 1800's hiding in the marshes to avoid the law; as a steamboat passenger disembarking in Cod Harbor and being rowed ashore; as President Woodrow Wilson in 1916 on an unplanned visit to the island; or as a modern day waterman coming home after a week of oyster dredging in icy waters.



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**WATER TRAILS**  
TANGIER ISLAND





## THE TRAILS:

All of the trails are marked with **THMICC** signs and the color of the trail.

### ORANGE TRAIL : (TOWN OF TANGIER MAIN TRAIL)

The Orange Trail is a circular trail through the Main Gut, the harbor and the Canton Gut. The Orange Trail goes under 4 bridges on the Main Gut, and one bridge on the Canton Gut. Two of the bridges on the Main Gut have low clearance. During a high tide, you may have to portage the boat and put in on the opposite side of the bridge. Along the Main Gut you will see the Bay View Inn and the Tangier Combined School. Look for “shove boats”, the small flat-bottomed boats indigenous to the island and originally used to deliver groceries and supplies to the back doors of the houses before there were roads on the island. You will paddle through the harbor, filled with working crab boats (Chesapeake dead-rise style) and soft crab shedding houses. If you’re lucky, The Delvin K, the large oyster buy-boat may be in the harbor. Canton Gut brings you through marshes to Cod Harbor. Stingrays are often seen in the shallow waters of Cod Harbor. Herons and cormorants are abundant here.

### GREEN TRAIL : (PORT ISOBEL TRAIL)

The Green Trail follows the main channel northeast to Port Isobel, owned by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Visitors are welcome. A scenic walking trail takes you through the marshes. Insect repellent is a must!

### BLUE TRAIL : (MARSH TRAIL)

The Blue Spur branches off of the Orange Trail heading south and west, just before the “Hoistin” Bridge on Factory Road. This trail winds through the marshes and brings you close to the beach on the southwest side of the island. The gut here is very shallow during low tide. Look for “pennywinkles” (snails on the reeds) and fiddler crabs.

### YELLOW TRAIL : (COD HARBOR TRAIL)

The Yellow Spur branches off of the Orange Trail heading south, where the Canton Gut meets Cod Harbor. Aim towards the tall metal remains of the former fish-steaming factory. This trail takes you to the “fish hook” portion of the beach and leads you to the lagoon. You can paddle into the lagoon, beach your boat and walk along the beach. The beach here is lovely and isolated. During July and August there is a nesting colony of terns and black skimmers on the northeast side of the hook. Be especially careful not to disturb their nests. Pelicans and gulls line up along the southern tip of the island (“the point”) where Tangier Sound meets the bay. Looking south you will see the automated Tangier Light, built on the foundation of the original Tangier Sound Lighthouse (1890-1961).

### PINK TRAIL : (THE UPPARDS TRAIL)

The Pink Trail is a circular route north of the main channel. It takes you through the “Uppards.” Though currently just marsh, the “Uppards” were once home to about 600 people, including a separate school and grocery stores. All that remains of this once thriving community is a small hunting lodge at the north end. The trail winds through marsh and takes you close to a sand beach on the western side, perfect for a picnic. Near the beach, you may have to portage the boat across the marsh for a short distance.



## SAFETY RULES AND REGULATIONS

### SAFETY INFORMATION:

- Always wear a life jacket.
- Know the tides.
- Stay in your boat if it becomes stuck. Do not get out of the boat. The marsh bottom can act like quicksand. Try shifting your weight carefully as you push off with your paddle.
- Cell phone service is not reliable on the island.
- Operating watercraft under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal.
- There are no restrooms available.

### RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES:

- Water
- Sunscreen and hat
- Insect repellent

### LEAVE NO TRACE ETHICS:

- Carry out your trash and any trash you see.
- Don't pick or remove any flowers, plants or shells.
- Avoid trampling vegetation.
- Respect the wildlife. Observe from a distance. Avoid during nesting or feeding. Do not touch, disturb or feed any birds or animals.
- Keep noise to a minimum in the marshes.
- Respect the privacy and property of the Tangier residents.
- The workboats return in the afternoon. Please exercise caution and keep your distance.

### PADDLING TIPS:

- Paddle with a partner or group. Never boat alone.
- Expect to get wet.
- Avoid shallow areas.
- Bring water.
- Watch the weather and get off the water before summer thunderstorms strike.
- If you fall out of your boat and become stuck in the mud, remain calm. Use your partner or a paddle to help you work your way out.
- Dress appropriately. Wear wading shoes.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE THE NECESSARY SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND EQUIPMENT FOR A SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE VISIT.

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