Welcome to the Tubman Road Hiking Trail on the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

This 27,000-acre Refuge, established in 1933, is managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wetland habitat.

Blackwater Refuge is one of the main wintering areas for migratory waterfowl using the Atlantic Flyway. It is also a haven for the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel, and the bald eagle (listed as threatened).

This hiking trail provides visitors with opportunities to observe forest management techniques, small mammals, birds, and a variety of amphibians.

One goal of this Refuge is to increase habitat for the Delmarva fox squirrel and forest interior-dwelling birds. This area is being restored so it will eventually provide the dense, mature forest habitat these species need.

From Forest to Farm & Back to Forest

A stand of mature trees damaged by a tornado in 2002.

Sites along this trail reflect the area’s history of cattle farming, logging, and recent reforestation.

The first part of the trail shows the impact of a sudden and catastrophic event, a tornado ripped through this area in 2002. It dramatically altered the forest canopy by destroying dozens of mature trees, eliminating habitat for some wildlife species while creating new habitat for others such as turkey and deer.

Bald Eagle

The bald eagle, with its 7-foot wingspan, can be easily identified by its bright white head and tail.

The bald eagle population was drastically reduced by pollution and pesticides in the 1960s. Through careful management in places such as Blackwater Refuge, the population has rebounded.

Once listed as endangered, the bald eagle was upgraded to “threatened” status several years ago and may soon be removed from the federal Endangered Species List.

The Refuge’s woodlands and waterways support the largest nesting populations of eagles on the east coast, north of Florida.

Hops, Skip, Jump & Slither

Refuge staff and volunteers plant young lobolly pines and casks as part of the reforestation program.

This part of the Refuge supports a wide variety of amphibians and reptiles.

Procs, turtles, salamanders, and snakes abound in area ponds, vernal pools, freshwater sloughs, and ditches.

The Refuge’s delicate aquatic habitats provide food and breeding areas for insects, mammals, and migratory birds.

Spring Peeper

Marbled Salamander

Green Treefrog

Garter Snake

Snapping Turtle

Pickerel Frog

Five-lined Skink

Box Turtle

The Refuge has a variety of habitats, including tidal marshes, freshwater ponds, mixed evergreen and deciduous forests, and small amounts of upland coniferous.
Refuge Rules...Please:  
- Stay on designated trail at all times.  
- Per Federal code, do not disturb, harass or remove any animals or wildlife.  
- Turtles are not foot; all bicycles and other vehicles are prohibited.  
- All pets are prohibited.  
- Pick up and dispose of all litter.  
- At times, this area is used for scientific study.  
- Do not touch any flagging, marking or instruments.

**Catastrophic Change**  
In 2012, a tornado tore through this area, dramatically altering the landscape. Many large pines and hardwoods were snapped or ripped out of the ground. Following the regrowth of the forest, this area provides a perfect home for edge-dwelling animals.

**Reclaimed Fields**  
Formerly used as cattle pasture, this site rehabilitates itself into a “mixed forest” (pines and hardwoods). The Refuge staff conducts timber management activities which will allow the pines and oaks to mature and provide habitat for the Delmarva fox squirrel.

**Slough**  
This channel-shaped wetland is rich in diverse aquatic plants, including uncommon, needle-rush and spartina. Flow of water through the slough effectively disperses plant seeds.

**Old Home Site**  
The Tubman Road and surrounding farmlands were once busy and productive sites—hard to imagine as they revert to forest. Look for remnants of cattle pastures, cow paths, ditches and an old well.

**White Marsh**  
White Marsh is the brackish semi-tidal wetland to the north. This haven for migrating and over-wintering birds is a finger of the Blackwater River. The rising sea level has increased the salinity of the water. The salty marsh waters are spilling into forested areas, killing surrounding trees.

**Young Forest**  
Part of this homestead was grazed by cattle and used for other agricultural purposes until the 1960s. Notice evidence of cattle grazing—mirrored brow, old barbed wire fencing and signs of plowing. Under the Refuge staff care, slow-growing pines and oaks are taking hold, and one day will provide habitat for Delmarva fox squirrels and forest birds.

**Double Ditch Mystery**  
Historically, a single ditch often served as a property boundary. Along this old property line we find two ditches running side by side. The reason for two ditches is a mystery, but they clearly separate a_channel in land use, and the age and composition of the forest.

**Spot of Sunlight**  
Note the large, dead trees to your left. The death of these trees created an opening in the forest canopy. This gap allows sunlight to reach the forest floor, encouraging seeds to germinate and grow. Competition for sunlight and nutrients is intense in the forest—only the most vigorous plants survive.

**Frogs and Toads**  
The Refuge supports 13 species of frogs and toads. These creatures are a vital link in the food chain. They consume tons of insects every year, and are considered in many areas to be higher in the chain such as hawks, eagles, owls, hares, snakes and raccoons.

**Turkey**  
Signs of wild turkeys can be seen throughout this area. This beautiful, shy bird was once abundant here.

Unrestricted hunting and land use changes eliminated turkeys from all but a few counties in Western Maryland by the early 1900s. To help reestablish populations, wild birds were captured and relocated throughout the state. Today, the turkey population at Blackwater Refuge is large enough to allow biologists to capture wild birds here for transplant to other locations.

---

Old Tubman Road  

Refuge Property  

---

**Tubman Road Trail**  
This trail follows new paths and existing roads as it winds through the forest. The trail is approximately 2 miles long and takes about 1 1/2 hours to hike. Yellow markers will guide you along the entire trail.

**For More Information**

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service manages more than 549 refuges. The Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat, and represents the most comprehensive wildlife management program in the world.

For funding this trail was provided by the Chesapeake Bay Gateway Network, the Waterfowl Festival, and the Friends of Blackwater.

- **The Friends of Blackwater**  
  [www.friendsofblackwater.org](http://www.friendsofblackwater.org)
- **The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center**  
  2145 Key Drive  
  Phone: 410-228-2677  
  Exhibits, gift shop with field guides for sale.
- **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge**  
  [http://www.fws.gov/mbunie](http://www.fws.gov/mbunie)
  Email: [info@fws.gov](mailto:info@fws.gov)
  Mailing Address:  
  2145 Key Drive  
  Cambridge, Maryland 21613

---

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a Chesapeake Bay Gateway, is one of your entry points to enjoy and learn about the places, stories, spirit and mysteries of the Chesapeake and its watershed. Explore this and other sites in the Gateway Network. Visit [www.baygateway.net](http://www.baygateway.net) for more information.