

Patuxent River Park: A CMPG Wildlife and Nature Photography Outing

BACKGROUND:

The following info was prepared by Steve Talabac. I attended a similar pontoon boat trip on Sunday July 7. That one was open to the general public. I plan to go on this CMPG photo outing. Representative photos that I had captured are posted on my site:

https://www.sjtphotography.com/patuxent_river_park_july_2019

Feel free to contact me at stevetalabac@gmail.com if you have any questions.

WHAT:

A four (4) hour privately-led wildlife and nature photo outing ***exclusively for CMPG members***. Our group will be guided by Matthew Felperin, Park Naturalist and amateur nature photographer with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation. The itinerary is planned to consist of:

- 2 hours of wildlife photography along the Patuxent River on board a large pontoon boat (approximately 8am to 10 am)
- A park-provided bus ride (~15 minute drive each way) to/from the Visitor Center and Mattaponi Bridge. The “bridge” (part of the *Chesapeake Bay Critical Area*) is a long curved elevated wooden boardwalk overlooking the marsh. We will allocate approximately 1 1/2 hours of wildlife and landscape photo ops from the bridge.

Please note that these timelines are estimates. They could vary depending upon the extent of wildlife activity, weather conditions, and other factors that could potentially alter this planned itinerary.

WHEN:

Saturday July 27, 2019

8:00 am to Noon

An early morning start is best for wildlife activity and offers the relative comfort of comparatively cooler DC summer morning temperatures. The outing will take place unless severe weather conditions (e.g., thunderstorms, heavy rain, strong winds, etc.) are forecast.

WHERE:

We will meet at the Patuxent River Park Visitor Center building located at:

Patuxent River Park

16000 Croom Airport Road

Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Phone: 301-627-6074

Google Map for driving directions is provided [here](#):

FYI: On Sunday July 7 I drove from our home in Clarksville and took Rt 32 east to US Rt 301 south to avoid the I-495 beltway. It took me 1 hour.

COST AND FORM OF PAYMENT:

Prince Georges County and Montgomery County residents: \$10 per person

All other residents: \$13 per person

Cash (preferred) or major credit cards. Payment in full to be made at the Visitor Center the morning of the photo outing.

PHOTOGRAPHERS:

The pontoon boat has a capacity of approximately 35 passengers. **HOWEVER we are limiting this photo outing to a MAXIMUM of 12 photographers.** This will ensure there is enough space to safely allow freedom of movement on the pontoon boat as we come upon photo ops and to provide all photographers with elbow room to get clean shots.

Sign up with instructions to be arranged by Earl. **PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT ME TO SIGN UP.**

WHAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE AND PHOTOGRAPH:

NOTE: As with all wildlife photography, sightings are not guaranteed. However ospreys are plentiful along this stretch of the Patuxent this time of year.

- Ospreys (adults and recently fledged chicks) in nests very close to the river's edge and (hopefully) flight and Osprey fishing shots
- Great Blue Herons
- Barred Owls
- Other raptors (e.g., bald eagles)
- Sightings of other bird, reptile, and mammal wildlife are possible.
- Marsh and Patuxent River estuary landscapes/scenery

Matt will drive the pontoon boat and maneuver it to provide optimal shooting angles to the subject matter. When nearing osprey nests or Great Blue Herons along the river banks, he will cut the engine and allow the boat to quietly drift with the current to provide a stable shooting platform and to ensure a safe distance so as to not stress the wildlife.

SUGGESTED CAMERA EQUIPMENT:

All of my shots taken on July 7 were with my full frame Canon 5D Mark III body and 100-400 mm f4.5/5.6 telephoto lens. I also brought a 24-105 mm zoom for scenic and close up shots of some of the marsh flora (e.g., Cypress Swamp boardwalk trail). Use of a 1.4x teleconverter, or a 500 mm (or longer) lens would of course be advantageous for distant shots. All of my shots were hand held. For safety considerations a tripod cannot be used on the pontoon boat. A tripod may be useful on the Mattaponi Bridge boardwalk portion of the photo outing (**NOTE:** I did not visit Mattaponi Bridge on my July 7 trip).

NOTE: If there is any osprey activity at the nesting platforms located along the river bank, the nests are constructed low to the ground; they will therefore be roughly at eye-level height when shooting from the boat.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE, FOOD, DRINK AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Wear footwear that provides secure footing** while on the pontoon boat and while walking around on land. We will, after all, be in an estuary environment! The pontoon boat has a slip resistant deck coating and although we will not be speeding over the river and purposely splashing water on the deck, we will after all be on the water!
- **Wear summer apparel and bring a hat to offer protection from the sun.** The pontoon boat has fixed seating along both sides and there is more than enough seating for all participants and camera bags. A covered canopy extends about 2/3 of the length of the boat to provide shade from the sun and cover should there be an unexpected rain shower. Shooting from under the canopy out the sides of the boat is easily accomplished. The bow of the boat is not under the canopy. There are several rows of seats at the bow. There is standing room for perhaps 6-8 people to comfortably shoot while standing (e.g., for an overhead flight shot). There may be occasions when we will have to share that space and give all participants an opportunity to shoot from the bow.
- **Bring/wear sunscreen**
- Although I did not experience any flying insects (e.g., mosquitos) during my trip, you may want to consider bringing **insect repellent**.
- **IMPORTANT - To avoid dehydration bring water!** You may also want to bring food (e.g., snacks, sandwiches). There are no food concession stands available where we will be in the park. Please be prepared to bag and remove all trash.
- **NOTE: There are no bathrooms on the pontoon boat!** Restrooms are available directly across the Visitor Center before and after our pontoon boat trip.