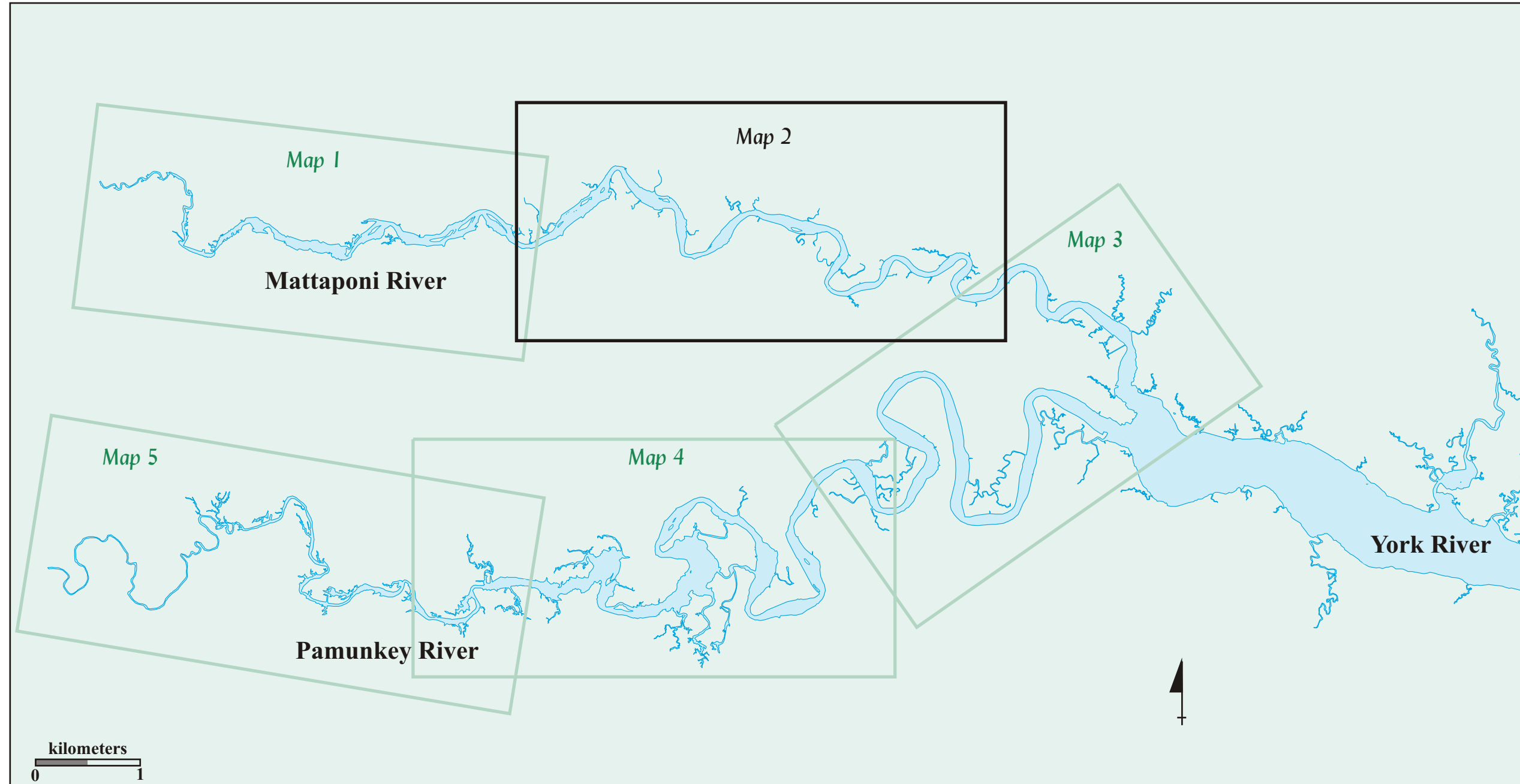


Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers

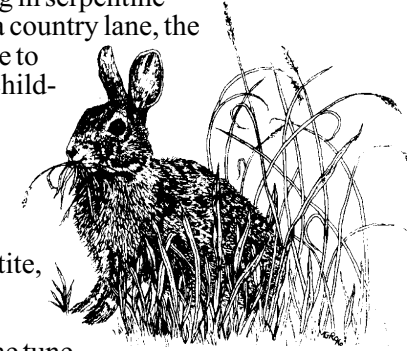
— Map Guide —



— What You Might Find on this Part of the River —

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

The cottontail is a familiar sight throughout the fields and forests of the watershed. Dashing under cover or running in serpentine fashion across a country lane, the cottontail is sure to remind you of childhood tales and adventures.



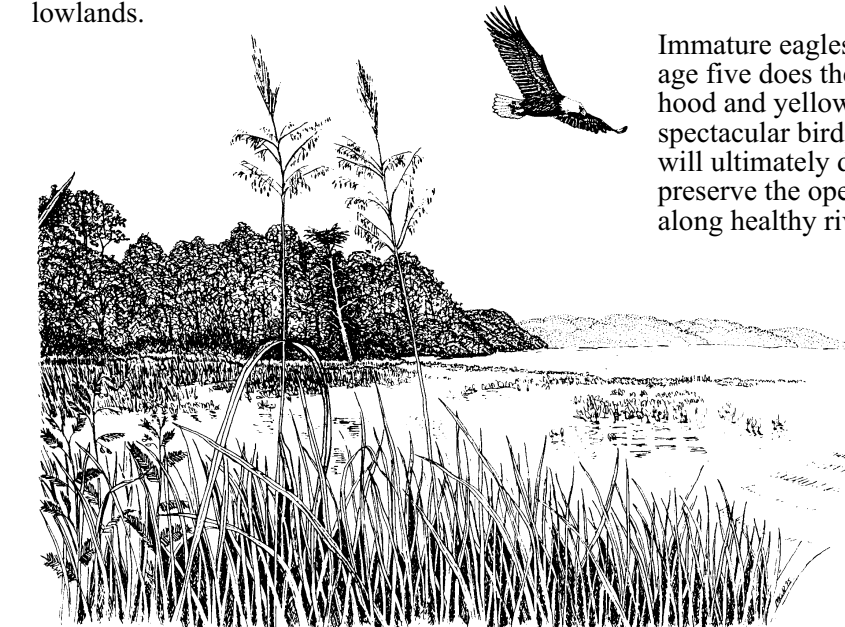
This clever mammal has a voracious appetite, consuming just about anything that grows, to the tune of forty percent of its body weight daily. Like other rabbits, it is a prolific breeder. Young rabbits reach independence in 16 short days, when their mother prepares for the arrival of the next litter. Many youngsters are lost in the nest to foul weather and predation. But those that reach maturity are assured a rich diet and plenty of good places to hide and raise their young in the dense thickets of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey lowlands.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucephalus*)

For those fortunate enough to catch sight of a bald eagle, a day on the river surely has been well spent. After a close brush with extinction in the 1960s from both habitat loss and exposure to DDT and other pesticides, bald eagles are slowly making a comeback in the Chesapeake Bay region. Along with the Rappahannock River, the Mattaponi and Pamunkey provide the isolation and habitat conditions needed for their survival.

Bald eagles have long been cherished as a national symbol of courage and staterhood but, in truth, the bird is cunning and calculating, prompting Benjamin Franklin to write, "He is a bird of bad moral character," and "does not get his living honestly." Indeed, the eagle often steals a meal from the talons of an osprey or other bird flying in its range. Small mammals of the river's edge supplement the eagles' preferred food source—fish that are plucked dead from the shorelines or fresh out of the water with uncanny precision. With two centers of focus in each eye, the eagle is blessed with the ability to see both sideways and head-on at the same time.

Immature eagles are amber in color. Not until age five does the eagle sport a brilliant white hood and yellow beak. The future of this spectacular bird of prey is precarious at best. It will ultimately depend upon our ability to preserve the open space the bald eagle requires along healthy river corridors.



Pickerelweed (*Pontedaria cordata*)

Pickerelweed is a favorite among canoeists and other paddlers, who can spot its lilac-colored spikes among the sea of green marsh plants. Its leaf shape is similar to the arrow arum, but the veins run parallel lengthwise, and its stem is generally shorter. Like arrow arum, this plant occurs in freshwater marshes.



Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

A favorite among wildflower lovers, this well-known perennial of wetland areas is a familiar sight in the watershed. Its bright scarlet flowers grow from a lengthy, 18-inch spike, topping a smooth stem. Leaves alternate and are lance-shaped and toothed. Look for its delicate flower in July and August along freshwater stretches of the river and in wooded swamps.

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)

Often called scarlet maple or swamp maple, the red maple is a dominant species of tree in the Mattaponi and Pamunkey river valleys. Identifiable by its spectacular red color in the fall, the red maple is, without rival, the most common East Coast species based on its enormous north-south distribution. Large, with a short or stout trunk having a few large forks, the red maple boasts a somewhat irregular crown of long curving branches, and sports drooping reddish leafstalks. The leaves are dull green on top and silvery-white underneath, and turn a pale yellow before dropping.