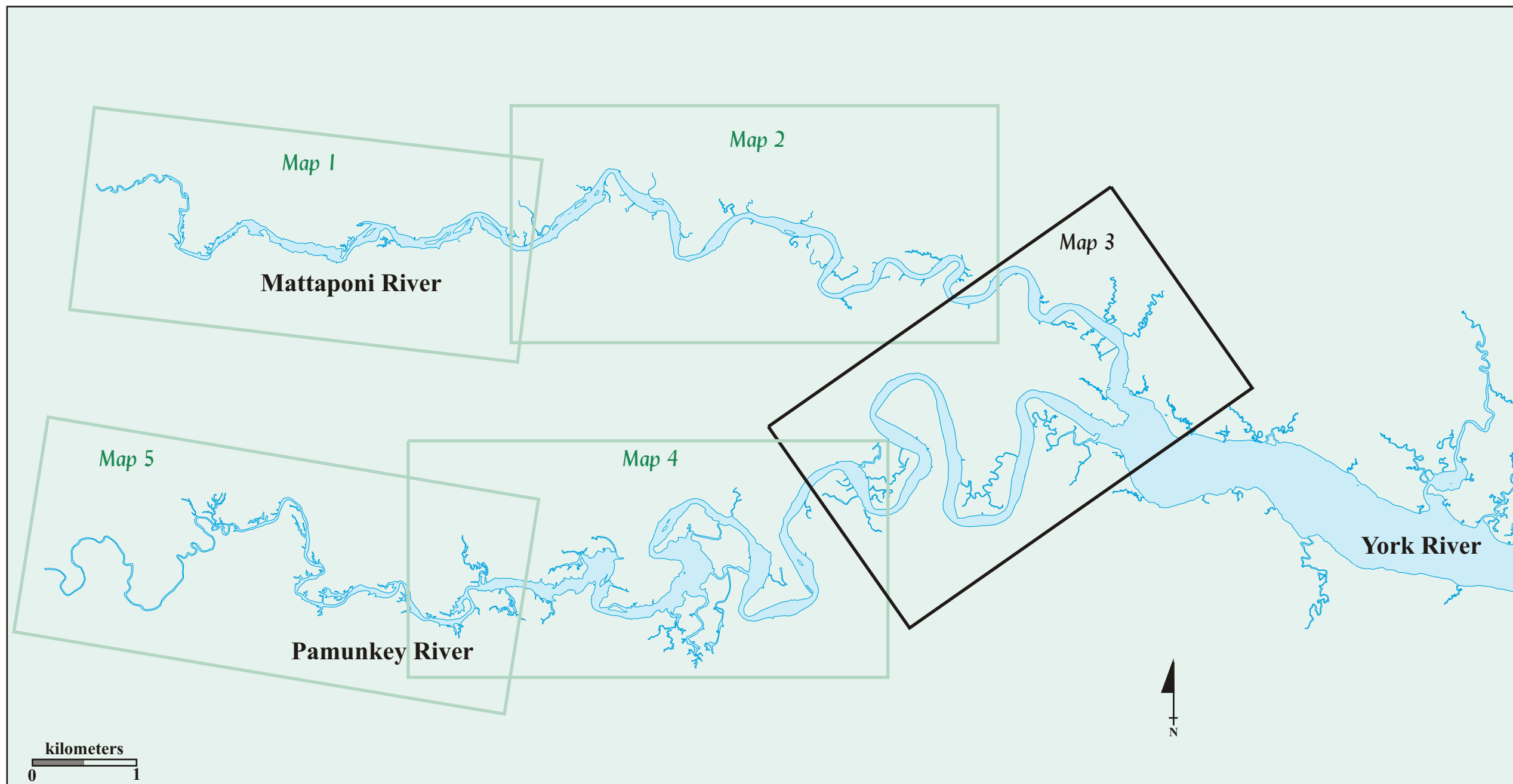


Lower Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers

— Map Guide —



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

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Early morning and sunset paddlers may be lucky enough to spot a red fox feeding along the water's edge on insects, berries, mice, and voles. The red fox is the more commonly seen fox of the two that inhabit the Chesapeake region, sporting silky rust-red body fur and a white underside, with a bushy tail of red and black fur tipped in white. Its swift feet and lower legs are black.

The body of this nocturnal creature reaches about 25 inches at maturity, and the tail, another 15 inches. At about ten pounds, the red fox is one of the smaller members of the canine family. Both the male and female pups are raised in small dens found near the river's edge.

The red fox is known for its cunning and clever behavior and its ability to elude the most able of hunters. It has adapted well to changes in the watershed and is commonly found in more developed regions.

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Perhaps the most conspicuous large mammal you'll encounter in the watershed is the graceful, lean white-tailed deer. The loss of natural predators and an increase in edge habitat—places where forest meets open field—have contributed to the white-tailed deer's abundance.

Males, or bucks, are distinguished by their antlers, which fall off after mating season. New antler growth begins again in summer with a velvety cover of tiny blood vessels. This later dries.

Look for a maze of hoof-prints along the river-bank, where deer frequent at night for a cool drink. White-tailed deer graze on forest seedlings and saplings and, at nighttime, venture into open meadows and fields to munch on grasses and field crops.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

With wings spanning close to five feet and white tufts of feathers on its head and breast, the osprey is often mistaken for a bald eagle. It is a familiar sight along these rivers. More familiar, however, are osprey nests. The massive structures weighing as much as several hundred pounds are often built atop utility poles and channel markers to protect the young from raccoons and other predators.



The osprey is a superb and powerful flyer and can spot fish at 150 feet in the air. Unlike bald eagles, which rarely get more than their feet wet when dining, ospreys tend to perform underwater dives that leave their brown and white feathers wet as they emerge with fish in their talons.

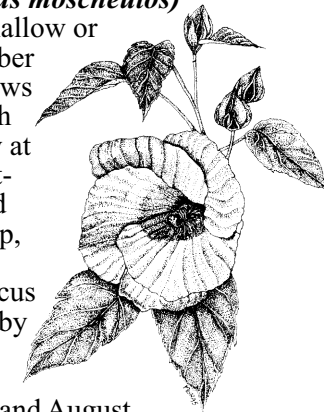
Like the bald eagle, the osprey's future depends upon plenty of open space and healthy river habitats.

Saltmarsh Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*)

Saltmarsh cordgrass is a common sight in estuarine and brackish waters, where it often grows along the creek's banks behind big cordgrass. Its hollow stem is round, topped by a narrow cluster of between 5 and 40 spikes, each up to 4 inches in length. Saltmarsh cordgrass can be found in the high marsh, along the lower edges, and anywhere in between, in varying heights between two and six feet.

Marsh hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos*)

Sometimes called rose mallow or marsh mallow, this member of the mallow family grows in both fresh and brackish marshes, most frequently at the upland edge. Its heart-shaped leaf has a serrated edge and is smooth on top, and its stem is round and smooth. The marsh hibiscus can be readily identified by its large gorgeous white or pink flower with red center, blooming in July and August. Growing up to seven feet, it makes a lovely transition zone between marsh and taller upland vegetation.



Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Black gum, sometimes referred to as black tupelo, is another resident of the riverside forest community, preferring moist soils in hardwood and pine forests. Distinctive in its height, with its dense or sometimes flat-topped crown and many slender, almost horizontal branches, the black gum's glossy foliage turns bright scarlet in the fall. Half-inch-long berry-like fruits are blue-black in color and are consumed by many birds and mammals.

Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)

Early spring paddlers are rewarded for their effort in a hundred ways, but few moments are more exciting than coming upon the brilliant magenta-pink flowers of this small understory tree in bloom, the flowers blooming directly on leafless twigs. It is said that the flowers can be eaten as a salad, or fried (always be certain of what you are eating). Redbuds mark the arrival of the brief spring season, blooming immediately after the serviceberry trees have just spent their blooms. The leaves are heart-shaped, dull green in summer, and turn an almost opaque pale yellow in the fall.