The Charm of Franklin Point State Park

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Chesapeake Conservancy/National Park Service (NPS)

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Figure 1: Kayaking on Deep Creek

Rome was not built in a day, and similarly, state parks also take time to achieve greatness. Franklin Point State Park, in Shady Side, Anne Arundel County, Maryland, is a park that has been slowly evolving since it opened to the public in August 2015. It started out as little more than a 477-acre undeveloped peninsula with a small parking lot, just nine miles south of Annapolis. What piqued my interest, when I first visited a few days after it opened, was its location; situated about 5.5 miles from the closest designated public launch site, it opened up numerous paddling opportunities.

Unlike the bigger state parks, you won't find a ranger greeting you at the entrance. An outer gate secures the area between sunset and sunrise while during daylight hours, visitors can park for free in a small dirt lot on the northeast side of Dent Road near a kiosk and porta-john. From here, one has access to over three miles of white-blazed trails. Those wishing to use the cartop boat launch should go to the park's website to request the combination for the inner gate. Four hundred feet past this gate is a vehicle pull-off where paddlers can unload their boat and gear before returning their cars to the dirt lot outside the inner gate. A 160-foot-long dirt path connects the vehicle pull-off and the launch area, where you won't find a ramp or beach…just a sign, picnic table, and a gentle transition from the shore to Deep Creek.

Despite the name, Deep Creek is hardly deep, so check the tide table to ensure you do not launch or land near low tide. Heading north will take you closer to the headwater, where I've seen several red-winged blackbirds. Paddling south will take you to a scenic, grass-lined, narrow, and deeper waterway that stretches for

almost a quarter of a mile to a confluence at an old duck blind. At this point, one can turn left (southeast) and continue for another quarter mile on Deep Cove Creek to the Chesapeake Bay.

Figure 2: Red-winged blackbird on Deep Creek

Just south of the mouth of Deep Cove Creek is a small beach where I like to pull over to take a break or watch wildlife. Here, I've found horseshoe crabs, a black snake, a bald eagle, long-tailed ducks, snowy egrets, and a surf scoter. Half a mile north of the mouth is Flag Pond Creek, another natural waterway that you'll want to avoid near low tide. I managed to get a mile upstream on it at high tide.

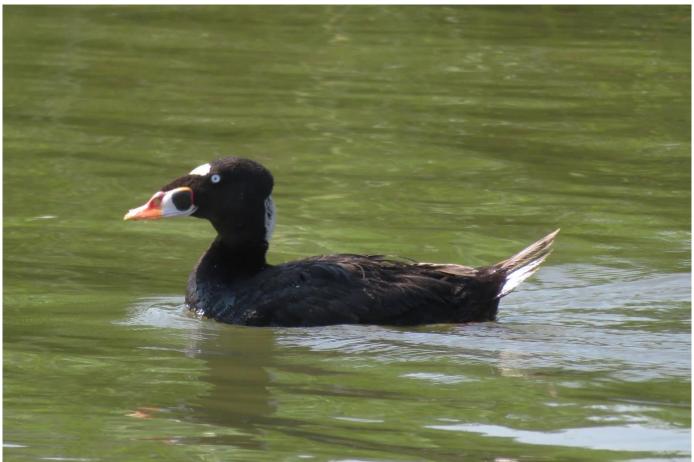*Figure 3: Snowy egret near the mouth of Deep Cove Creek*

Figure 4: Surf scoter near the mouth of Deep Cove Creek

Instead of heading to the Chesapeake Bay, paddlers can continue straight at the old duck blind to meander upstream on Deep Cove Creek, a place I've encountered a multitude of fauna. In the first third of a mile, the pristine views are broken up briefly by a section of boat piers before the narrowness opens up into a wider, shallow area dotted with a few waterfront homes, mostly set back from the water so they aren't so obvious. Paddling west for a little less than a half mile will lead to another natural, narrow section that is navigable for roughly 0.4 mile.

Figure 5: Muskrat on Deep Cove Creek

Figure 6: Northern water snake on Deep Cove Creek

If you like being immersed in nature on the water, you'll love Franklin Point State Park - you never know what you'll find. One day while paddleboarding on Deep Cove Creek with my friend Ryan, we spotted what resembled huge globs of snot hanging from reeds above the water line. After we speculated a number of ridiculous and unlikely possibilities, I later determined that they were unfortunate jellyfish that got caught in the vegetation during the ebb tide.

Figure 7: Ryan paddleboarding on Deep Cove Creek

Figure 8: Jellyfish hanging above the water

Paddling is the main reason I go to Franklin Point State Park, but it isn't the only reason. I also enjoy exploring the trails, which never seem crowded. Since ticks tend to prevail in the warmer months, winter is the best time to hike. In 2018, I did an exceptionally cold First Day Hike and got to see the Chesapeake Bay frozen to about 100 yards out from the shore.

Figure 9: Frozen water on the Chesapeake Bay

My most recent hike was March 1, 2022, just a few days after Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary announced that the conditions were good for a spotted salamander mass migration. As I walked the trails, I scanned the inland freshwater pools and came across a cluster of salamander eggs. I suspect this is a great place to find amphibians since the flat terrain and oftentimes poorly drained soil creates a nice environment for them, though I'm sure the mosquitos also like it.

Walking on a trail called Pine Alley, I couldn't help noticing it was unusually wide and straight. My first thought was that it might be a rail trail, but I later learned that it was once an 1800-foot-long runway. That, along with a 3000-foot runway (both unpaved), were part of Deep Creek Airport, which was established in 1950 and sold in 1988 for development which fell through, supposedly due to the presence of wetlands.

Figure 10: Pine Alley

Figure 11: 1982 aerial photo of Deep Creek Airport provided by Historic Aerials

I don't know what changes lie in the future for Franklin Point State Park. It would be nice to have some historic information posted at the kiosk along with printed trail maps to take. Too much more might spoil its natural, undeveloped feel that I find charming, like a historic small town on Maryland's Eastern Shore. This

park isn't for everyone, and it will never draw the big crowds like some of the more popular parks…but that is part of the reason I think it is great as is.

For more information see

[Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Franklin Point State Park](#)

[Bay Journal - Franklin Point's beauty plain as the eye can see](#)

[Airfields-Freeman – Deep Creek Airport](#)

[Historic Aerials](#)