NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System
Jamestown Buoy
Spring Seasonal Information

Welcome to NOAA's Jamestown CBIBS Buoy. It lies off Jamestown Island about a quarter-mile south of Captain John Smith's statue. In a typical spring, salinity here is very low because of runoff from winter snow and rain throughout the large James River watershed. If such conditions had occurred in the spring of 1607, more of the Jamestown colonists would have survived the summer.

Unbeknownst to them, these Englishmen came to Virginia during a serious drought, so the water they drank from the James here was brackish, which made them quarrelsome and put enough stress on their bodies that many died during the hot weather.

Spring weather turns winter's browns and grays into a feast of greens, especially the tender new needles on the river's bald cypress trees. The wild azalea and mountain laurel add color to wooded banks along the James, Powhatan Creek behind Jamestown Island, and the nearby Chickahominy River. Ospreys have returned from their wintering grounds in Central and South America to repair their nests, mate, fish, and start on their new families, as have brightly colored songbirds like warblers.

During spring in John Smith's time, both the Native Americans and the Englishmen who learned from them fished the river around Jamestown for nutritious *anadromous* fish—fish that run up the river to spawn before returning to the ocean. Today, there are still many fishermen on the James.

Atlantic sturgeon were amazingly large in Smith's time, ten to fourteen feet in length. Sturgeon were highly prized not only for their caviar but for their flesh, which is tasty when smoked. But sturgeon numbers plummeted; in January 2012, NOAA Fisheries listed the Chesapeake Bay sturgeon population as endangered.

In spring, the Native Americans of Capt. Smith's time planted corn, beans, and squash, and they foraged the marshes for edible plants such as cattails. The stalk hearts and bloom spikes of these plants are most tender and valuable as food in the spring, when other food plants—like wild rice, which ripens at the end of summer—are just beginning to grow.