NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System
Stingray Point Buoy
Spring Seasonal Information

Welcome to NOAA's Stingray Point CBIBS Buoy, located between the mouths of the Rappahannock and Piankatank Rivers, just outside the shoal extending underwater from what's left of the beach where Capt. Smith had his famous encounter with the stingray.

Spring brings crabs crawling out of their wintertime beds on the rivers' bottoms. Many of them will gravitate to restored oyster reefs and natural oyster bars in the two rivers, to feed and get ready for the first slough of their shells around the new moon in May. As the waters warm, the oysters too feed more actively, getting ready for their spawn in June.

By now, spring-spawning mature rockfish and American shad have entered the Chesapeake from the Atlantic. These two species are examples of *anadromous* fish, which live in the ocean but head up the Bay's big rivers to spawn in the spring near the Rappahannock's fall line (head of navigation). This group includes alewife herring, hickory shad, rockfish, blueback herring, and American shad. The white perch of the rivers' mid-sections are also headed up to the fall lines to spawn now.

Atlantic menhaden, too, are moving up into the Bay, but most of them are immature one- and two-year-olds that will spend the summer grazing through the Chesapeake's plankton communities and, in turn, feeding predator fish like rockfish, bluefish, sea trout, and flounder.

The blues, trout, and flounder spent the winter on the Atlantic's continental shelf, along with Norfolk spot and Atlantic croakers, all of which move into the Bay to feed in warm weather. Meanwhile, ospreys and great blue herons, with nesting and egg-laying on their minds, are feeding on all the smaller fish they can find.