



## NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System Jamestown Buoy: Winter Seasonal

Over the winter, rainy and snowy weather in the huge James River watershed should keep the salinity below 3 Practical Salinity Units, in the range considered fresh. But a dry winter will demonstrate the degree to which Jamestown Island lies in the river's transition zone from fresh to salt.

That transition affects many living things, like the freshwater bald cypress trees, which are unusual because they are deciduous conifers. They are showing bare branches now, just like other riverbank trees like maples, black gums, and sycamores. They won't begin to green up until late March.

In the marshes, migratory waterfowl like mallards, black ducks, and greenwing teal are picking through last fall's crop of seeds from annual plants like wild rice, smartweed, tearthumb, Walter's millet, tickseed sunflower, and rice cutgrass. These birds have flown in from nesting grounds across Canada and the upper U.S. Midwest to spend the winter in these mostly ice-free waters. Osprey nests will remain vacant until early March, as their residents spend their "other summer" in Central and South America.

Bald eagles and great blue herons, however, will pick out a living of small fish on mud flats warmed by the weak winter sun, and the eagles will hunt sick or aging waterfowl. Both species will begin mating and nesting in February.

As water temperatures fall into the low 40s and even upper 30s, predatory rockfish, largemouth bass, and white perch will seek out the relative warmth of deep holes in the rivers and creeks to wait out winter's lean season. Only the chain pickerel and blue catfish will continue to feed with any regularity.

As winter progresses, you can check the trends and current conditions at [www.buoybay.noaa.gov](http://www.buoybay.noaa.gov). Cold water requires extreme caution and extra safety practices for boaters. Before heading out on these waters, check conditions at the NOAA CBIBS Jamestown buoy, and check the NOAA National Weather Service forecast for the area.