

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System Patapsco Buoy: Summer Seasonal

The NOAA Patapsco CBIBS buoy sits firmly in the tidal Susquehanna River, which we know better as the upper Chesapeake Bay. Rainfall in the Susquehanna's watershed wrestles with salty water that flows all the way up the Bay from the Atlantic, so salinities here vary widely through the year. The highest salinity values usually come in late summer, after flows from springtime snowmelt and rainstorms subside.

If you'd like to see graphic representations of these water quality features at the Patapsco buoy over time, and the way they affect each other, you can visit www.buoybay.noaa.gov and create your own graphs. This is a great feature for anyone who wants to understand how the Bay and its rivers "work."

As summer settles into the upper Bay, young white perch, rockfish, croakers, spot, menhaden, silversides, and bay anchovies spread out around the channel edges in this area and especially on nearby oyster reefs like Seven Foot Knoll and Belvidere Shoals. Some will become food for larger adult fish, especially rockfish and white perch. Fast-swimming bluefish and even a few Spanish mackerel are already chasing anchovies and "peanut" (or baby) menhaden in the open waters outside the Patapsco buoy.

These little fish have to avoid predators from above, especially terns, laughing gulls, and herring gulls, and from ospreys, great blue herons, and fast-swimming furry fishermen like river otters that chase them in the shallows to the east and west. Somehow, though, even with all of these predators, the nursery waters around the mouth of the Patapsco should produce enough juvenile fish this summer to help swell the stock of each species over the fall and winter.