

The Conejohela Flats

The exposed mudflats and shallows around the islands across the river are known as the Conejohela Flats. Local residents farmed this area before it was flooded in 1929 by the Safe Harbor Dam. Today, the Flats are prized for some 17,000 migratory shorebirds that host annually. As many as 38 species of shorebirds use this area to feed and rest on their journey to breeding grounds as far north as the Arctic Tundra and wintering grounds in South and Central America. Species groups include sandpipers, plovers, godwits, phalaropes, avocet, curlew, stilt, and dowitchers.

Conejohela is a term derived from an Indian word—meaning “kettle on a long, upright pole”—and refers to a nearby Native American settlement dating from the early 1700s.

The shallow waters around the Flats are also habitat for many wetland species. In late winter and early spring, up to 5,000 Tundra Swans stage here before they migrate north. Over 30 species of waterfowl have been recorded. Bald Eagles and Ospreys also use the Flats, primarily between April and September. Terns, herons, egrets, rails, hawks, and owls occur here each year as well. In all, a wide assortment of birds coexists in this unique habitat.



Non-native purple loosestrife, an invasive and rapidly spreading plant that has no value to wildlife, threatens the mud flats. It crowds out beneficial, native vegetation and transforms mud flats into useless habitat for birds and wildlife.

These birds are representative of the many species that frequent the Conejohela Flats.



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Lancaster - York Heritage Region
Susquehanna River Water Trail

This project was completed with generous financial contributions from the following project partners:
 East Dorset Township
 Mill Creek Landfill
 PA, Millwood LLC
 National Park Service, Chesapeake Bay Gateway & Water Trails Network
 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation
 PA Department of General Services & Heritage Parks Programs
 Lancaster County Planning Commission
 York Haven Water Power Corporation
 The John N. Greig Company

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