

Susquehanna's Bedrock Islands

The rocky islands scattered throughout this stretch of the Susquehanna River are known as the Conowingo Islands. Both scenic and ecologically important, they are one of the Susquehanna's most remarkable natural features. The Conowingo Islands consist of more than 30 islands stretching 3.5 miles downstream of Holtwood Dam. They range in size from small rock outcroppings to 65-acre Upper Bear Island. The islands are rugged and feature high cliffs separated by narrow channels. Some islands have gigantic potholes, a few of which are 10 to 20 feet in diameter and equally as deep. Others islands have mature forests, ponds, and marshes. Wolf Island consists of eight enormous rocks, one of which rises 60 feet above the water.

Map of the bedrock islands in the Susquehanna River below Holtwood Dam.

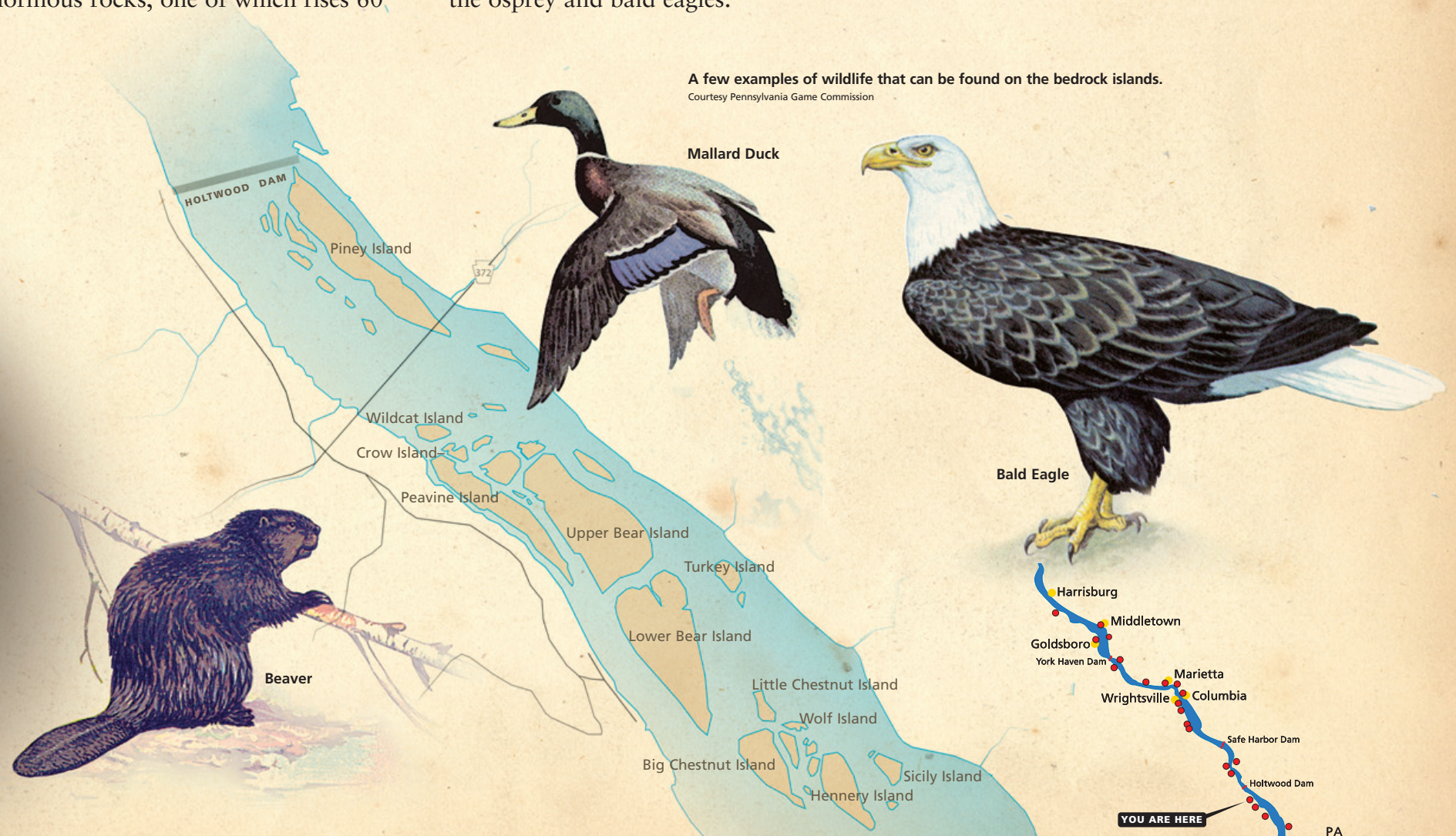
Photo of a man standing in a large bedrock island pothole.
Courtesy Lancaster Newspapers



Unlike the river's alluvial islands, which are formed from deposits of sediment, these islands consist of bedrock. They were carved by the Susquehanna's swift current as it cut into the hard schist bedrock on the river bottom.

The islands contain an impressive array of native plants that have adapted to the river's fluctuating water level. Botanists have identified more than 540 different plant species. They are also home to otters, beavers, mink, deer, raccoon, and fish-eating birds such as the osprey and bald eagles.

A few examples of wildlife that can be found on the bedrock islands.
Courtesy Pennsylvania Game Commission



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Susquehanna River Water Trail

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