

Chesapeake: The Aerial Photography of Cameron Davidson

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Nearly 10,000 years ago, rising sea levels filled a meteor-impact crater to form the Chesapeake Bay, North America's largest estuary, and the third largest in the world. The long tendrils of its watershed cover 64,000 square miles and span six states from Virginia to New York. Seventeen million people live within its boundaries. There are more than 100,000 streams, creeks, and rivers in the watershed, including 150 major rivers, with names that conjure ancient voices, such as the Susquehanna, Nanticoke, Mattaponi, and Rappahannock. These waters mix with the Atlantic Ocean in a brackish estuary that helped sustain Native Americans for centuries, but in recent years the bay has come under siege from the impacts of increasing population and industry, threatening this national treasure.

Cameron Davidson has been shooting aerial photography of the Chesapeake over a period of twenty years. The view from this privileged vantage point reveals humans' impact on the land and the water. It yields an abstract beauty that is seldom seen, from the seven bends of the Shenandoah River to the important marshlands and islands of the watershed. Davidson's lens captures the changing seasons traced from the headwaters of the Susquehanna at Otsego Lake in Cooperstown, New York, to the mouth of the bay at Virginia Beach. Davidson's poetic pictures bear witness to the bay's vulnerability and the fragility of its future.

Davidson's stunning full-color photography is arranged geographically and accompanied by the words of David Fahrenthold, who has written extensively about the Chesapeake Bay and other environmental topics for the *Washington Post*.



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