

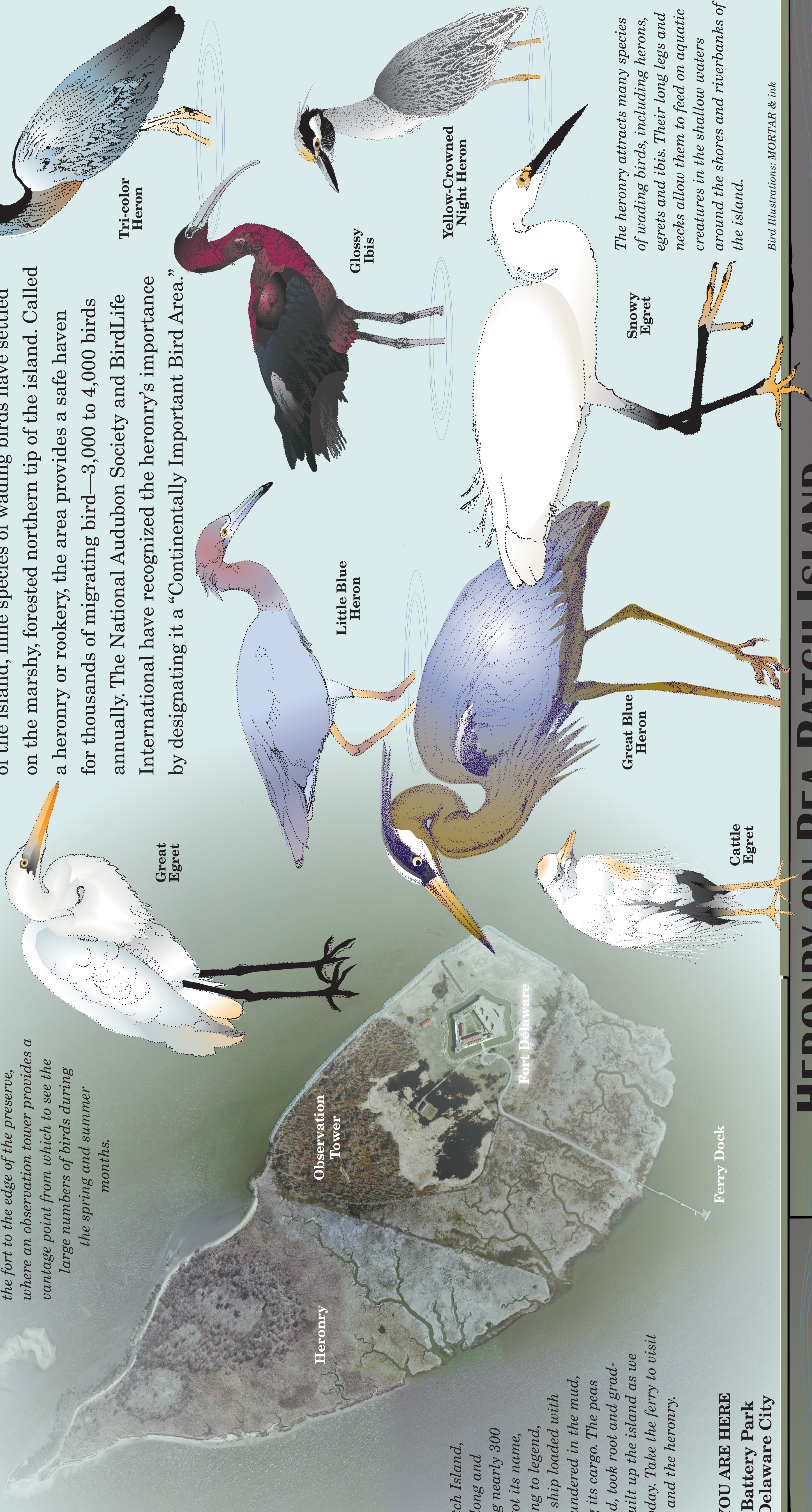
Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) protects the birds by restricting access to their nesting area. Visitors walk a short distance from the fort to the edge of the preserve, where an observation tower provides a vantage point from which to see the large numbers of birds during the spring and summer months.

Fort Mott Jersey Shore

Just a half-mile off Delaware City's Battery Park, Pea Patch Island is home to a large colony of herons in America. While Fort Delaware occupies the southern end of the island, nine species of wading birds have settled on the marshy, forested northern tip of the island. Called a heronry or rookery, the area provides a safe haven for thousands of migrating bird—3,000 to 4,000 birds annually. The National Audubon Society and BirdLife International have recognized the heronry's importance by designating it a "Continentially Important Bird Area."

Pea Patch Island, a mile long and covering nearly 300 acres, got its name, according to legend, when a ship loaded with peas foundered in the mud, spilling its cargo. The peas sprouted, took root and gradually built up the island as we see it today. Take the ferry to visit the fort and the heronry.

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Bird Illustrations: MORTAR & INK

HERONRY ON PEA PATCH ISLAND



Sources: Delaware Audubon Society; Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control; Federal Writers' Project—Delaware