

Diamondback Terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin

Size

The females of this species grow to a much larger size than males. Females reach a maximum of 9.8 in (25cm) while males reach only 5.5 (14cm).

Habitat

The diamondback terrapin is found in brackish (water with some salinity) coastal waters. Typical habitats include coastal swamps, estuaries, lagoons, tidal creeks, mangrove thickets, and salt marshes. Although the species is found in brackish water, periodic access to freshwater is necessary for health.

Distribution

The diamondback terrapin is found along brackish coastal waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in the north, to Corpus Christi, Texas, in the south.

Prey and Feeding Behavior

The diamondback terrapin eats snails, other mollusks, crustaceans, fish, insects, and carrion. They use the ridges in their jaw to crush their prey.

Reproduction

Breeding season is May through July. Sixty days later a clutch of 8-12 eggs will be laid, and between August and October the hatchlings will emerge. As with sea turtles, the gender of diamondback terrapin offspring is determined by temperature – a higher nest temperature produces more females while a lower nest temperature produces more males.

Conservation

Historically the diamondback terrapin was hunted almost to extinction for its meat to be used in terrapin stew. While there is still a legal harvest, the numbers are regulated and the harvest is primarily for export to Asian countries as meat, medicine, and pets.

Declines in populations are now mostly due to entanglement in crab pots, as well as habitat loss.

What can YOU do

Supporting sustainable development and fisheries will help to ensure the survival of the diamondback terrapin.

Marineland Dolphin Adventure

Est. 1938

Marineland Dolphin Adventure was founded as Marine Studios on June 23, 1938, designed to be an underwater film studio providing Hollywood movie makers with a window to the sea.

Over the years, Marine Studios served as the set for numerous films such as “Revenge of the Creature” (1955) and “Zaat” (1971). Marine Studios also served as the set for an episode of ABC’s “Benji Takes a Dive” (1981), which featured the first SCUBA diving dog. We continue to serve as a film studio, most recently involved in the filming of “Bernie the Dolphin” (2018).

The visionaries who worked together to create Marine Studios were some of the most successful and well-connected men of their time: Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney founded Pan American Airlines and financed “Gone with the Wind”. He served as the Chairman of the Board for Marine Studios. Douglas Burden, trustee of the American Museum of Natural History, served as the first President of Marine Studios. Grandson of legendary Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, Count Ilia Tolstoy acted as the Studios’ first Vice President and General Manager. It was the vision and determination that these men had that brought such success to Marineland from the beginning.

Based on the public’s fascination with marine science and passion for marine conservation, Marineland evolved to become Florida’s #1 tourist attraction and the first place to successfully train and breed bottlenose dolphins. So much of what we now know about marine life was discovered right here!

Marineland is proud to have played a part in changing our community’s relationship with the oceans from one of fear and dominance to one of respect and love. Marineland’s role in our community is surely one of the reasons that we are still here, 80 years later, and still being honored with the opportunity to teach and inspire.

