

Diamondback Terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin

These semi-aquatic turtles are well known for their colorful shells and gray skin that has dark black spots. This is the only species of terrapin in the United States that never moves out of the brackish water environment of salt marshes.

The salt marsh periwinkle is a common prey species, but the fiddler crab is also a favorite. Besides the periwinkle and fiddler crab these turtle also eat fish and some insects. Diamondback Terrapins spend most of their time in the water, and come out only to lay eggs and warm up on a sunny day.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s these turtles became an important ingredient in a very popular soup served at finer restaurants. As a result, the species was hunted until there were few left. Since then hunting this turtle has been outlawed, and their numbers have risen a little. Now there are other problems this turtle faces. Loss of habitat, highway deaths, pollution in the estuaries, and drowning in crab traps are just a few of those problems.

