

## HOW CAN I HELP?

Report sightings: This information will assist biologists in identifying critical habitat and road-kill hot spots and understanding the population. In Brevard County, pictures and GPS coordinates are especially helpful!

Email: [Terrapin@BrevardZoo.org](mailto:Terrapin@BrevardZoo.org)



Responsible crab trapping: Encourage crabbers to use by catch reduction devices on all crab pots. Email [terrapin@myfwc.com](mailto:terrapin@myfwc.com) for a list of places to pick one up for free.

Help terrapins cross the road: Always take them in the direction they are moving. Terrapins may bite, so make sure an adult moves the animal and watches for traffic.

Support habitat restoration and conservation organizations: Restoring natural areas provides improved habitat for terrapins and other wildlife.

Share your knowledge: Terrapins need public awareness and support to survive. Many researchers suggest that terrapins are imperiled. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission limits the possession and sale of terrapins.



To find out more information about Brevard Zoo conservation programs including terrapins, please visit: [BrevardZoo.org/conservation](http://BrevardZoo.org/conservation)

To report a sighting, please e-mail: [Terrapin@BrevardZoo.org](mailto:Terrapin@BrevardZoo.org)

## BREVARD COUNTY TERRAPINS

A partnership of local scientists, ecosystem managers and educators in Brevard County has assembled to investigate the status of the Florida East Coast diamondback terrapin and develop a conservation plan. The partnership is also looking for volunteers to help with field studies and developing management approaches to help nesting terrapins.

## ZOO TEENS

The Brevard Zoo Teen Conservation Team helps support this group and requests people who observe terrapins along Florida's Atlantic coast report this information to: [Terrapin@BrevardZoo.org](mailto:Terrapin@BrevardZoo.org)



Photos Provided by Florida DEP and the Breiningen family



## Florida East Coast Diamondback Terrapin

*Malaclemys terrapin tequesta*

A unique subspecies that lives along central Florida's Atlantic coast.





## DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN BASICS

Terrapins are a type of turtle that lives its entire life within estuaries. Estuaries are brackish (semi-salty) water bodies where fresh and saltwater mix along coastlines.

They are medium-size turtles, with the females being almost twice as big as the males.

Terrapins have strong jaws and eat crabs, snails, shrimp, fish, bivalves, worms, insects and carrion.

You can find terrapins in 16 states. Five subspecies are found in Florida. The Florida east coast diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin tequesta*) is the subspecies found in Brevard County.

Terrapins nest from late April until the end of July in Florida. The gender of the hatchlings is determined by the temperature of the nest.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE A TERRAPIN

### Average Size:

Male: 5 inches    Female: 8 inches

*Juveniles will be much smaller*



Bottom View (Plastron)



Top View (Carapace)



Strong beak to crush shells of crabs and snails

Unique pattern on skin



## WHY ARE TERRAPINS IMPORTANT?

Diamondback terrapins play an important role in the food chain. Terrapins and their eggs are eaten by a variety of predators including raccoons, foxes, birds and pets. In turn, terrapins help control populations of small prey and disperse sea grass as seeds pass through their digestive system.

Diamondback terrapins are a unique species. They are good at hiding in their environment; it can be difficult to study their populations. Although Diamondback terrapins live in 16 states across the U.S. east and gulf coasts, our local subspecies is found only from Volusia to Miami-Dade counties and little is known about their current population health.

Scientists want to learn more about them and need your support.



## THREATS TO TERRAPINS

- Habitat loss (especially nesting habitat)
- Predation
- Accidental drowning in crab pots
- Boat strikes
- Encounters with automobiles

## DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN NESTING

- Many terrapins nest in sandy places along estuarine waters. Is your backyard a terrapin habitat?
- Hatchlings are particularly helpless to the cats, dogs and cars in neighborhoods.
- Terrapins may lay multiple nests each season and usually nest during the day.

