

Terrapins are the only turtles in the world live exclusively in brackish water, making the Elizabeth River a perfect home!



Diamondback Terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin

Common Names: Terrapin

Size: Up to 9 inches in length

Lifespan: Up to 25 years

Habitat: Lives in the brackish tidal portions of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries including marshes, beaches, mudflats, and islands.

Range: Found along the Atlantic coast from as far north as Cape Cod down to the Florida Keys. They are also commonly found along the Gulf coast in Louisiana and Texas.

Diet: Eats mostly mollusks including snails, clams, and mussels. They will also eat worms, fish, insects, and crustaceans.

Appearance: The carapace (or top shell) ranges in color from brown to gray and has scales that grow in a diamond-shape, giving them their name! Their scaly skin is grayish and has black spots or streaks. They have a horned beak and a small black “mustache” above their mouth. They have webbed feet with strong claws that they use for swimming and digging.

Predators: Eggs and nestlings are eaten by raccoons, crows, gulls, rats, and foxes. Adult terrapins are generally only threatened by humans with their cars, crab pots, and development.

What can you do? If you crab, make sure to follow all laws and regulations with turtle exclusion devices and check your pots regularly. When you see turtles crossing the road, stop in a safe area with an adult, wait until traffic clears, and move the turtle in the direction it is heading.



On-Line Resources

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/discover/field-guide/entry/diamondback_terrapin

<https://www.britannica.com/animal/terrapin>

https://animaldiversity.org/site/accounts/information/Malaclemys_terrapin.html



www.elizabethriver.org