

The Diamondback Terrapin

- Found in marshes and tidal creeks along the Atlantic Coast of the US from Cape Cod, MA to Corpus Christi, TX
 - Only turtle in the world to occupy this habitat
- Plays essential role in maintaining healthy marsh ecosystems
- Feeds on the salt marsh periwinkle, a snail that forages on the salt marsh cord grasses that stabilize the marsh
- Marsh grasses die if periwinkles get too numerous
- Charleston area study proved that if all terrapin and blue crab were removed from the marsh, the area would be reduced to a mudflat in 8 months.
- Current trends in marshland die off are thought to be due to the decreasing numbers of terrapin
- Marshes are incredibly important buffers of storm surge caused by hurricanes. Their decrease coupled with the rising sea level will tremendously increase the damage to land and property caused by big storms and hurricanes.



Terrapin in Decline

- Development of coastal areas has decreased the availability of suitable nesting habitat
- Road construction has led to the deaths of 100s of female terrapins annually
 - Hit by cars when crossing road to nest
- 100 drown in abandoned crab traps
- Majority of nests predated by raccoon
 - Raccoon population has boomed because they thrive in human modified habitat
- Currently no bans on terrapin harvesting
- Terrapin excluder devices not mandatory on crab traps to prevent drowning
- Only way to get protection for terrapin is by determining their status throughout most of their territory through population studies
- Currently, only a handful of projects researching terrapin in the area
- This year, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) began compiling information on the Terrapin to submit proposals to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to list the Terrapin on Appendix II of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES)
- Currently, USFWS is undecided on whether to submit a proposal on the terrapin, citing that they need additional information and consultations.

