

For Creative Minds

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Diamond Terrapin Fun Facts

The word terrapin comes from the Algonquian Indian word *torope*, which means “edible turtle that lives in the brackish water.”



Diamondback terrapins are named for the diamond-shaped rings that appear on their top shells (carapace).

Female terrapins are much bigger than the males.



Webbed feet help them swim in the water, and the claws help them pull themselves on the shore.

Terrapins can pull their heads and legs into their bodies for protection. They don't close up completely like a box turtle.



Turtles do not have teeth; they do have strong enough beaks or jaws to bite through shells.

Head-started terrapins usually eat turtle pellets, but their diets can include cut-up worms, snails, and other foods that they would eat in their natural habitat.



In the wild, diamondback terrapins eat periwinkles (snails), clams, crabs, and some marsh plants.

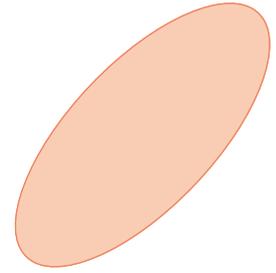
Diamondback Terrapin Life Cycle

Put the diamondback terrapin life-cycle events in order to spell the scrambled word.

P



Terrapin eggs are a rosy pink when they are first laid and gradually lighten in color. They are oblong in shape, about $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide.



T

Terrapins leave tracks that look like gigantic zippers as they pull themselves over the sand with their webbed feet with claws.



T



Terrapin mothers begin laying eggs when they are about 8 years old.

S

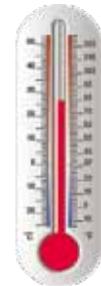


Hatchlings are only about the size of a quarter—one inch—when they are born.



R

For many species of turtles or terrapins, the sex (male or female) depends on the temperature in the nest. A warm temperature means females, and a cooler temperature means males.



Answer: TERPS: Diamondback terrapins are Maryland's state reptile. The University of Maryland's sports teams are called the Terrapins (Terps for short).

Where in the World?

Diamondback terrapins are found in the brackish (somewhat salty) waters of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, from Massachusetts to Florida and westward to the Texas and Mexican border (shown by the yellow line on the map below).

They live in bays, lagoons, rivers, and marshes. Experts believe that diamondbacks are the only turtles in North America that live entirely in brackish water.

In what states might you find diamondback terrapins?



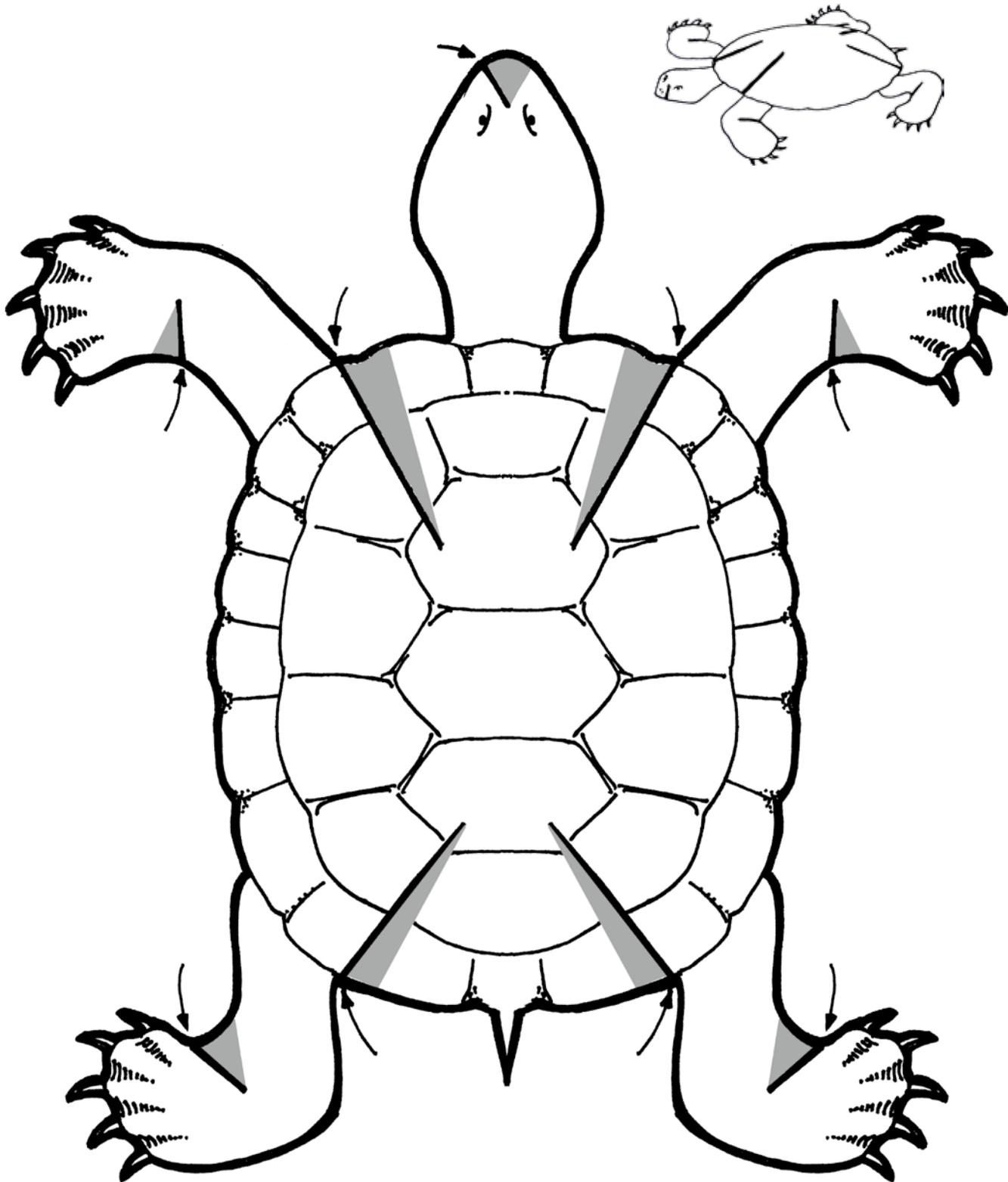
Diamondback terrapins used to be very common, but their numbers have declined in some areas. They are even considered endangered (at risk of disappearing from the earth) or threatened (at risk of becoming endangered) in some states.

To help protect them, some states now limit fishing or prohibit trapping and selling terrapins for food. In some areas, you might even see a “slow: terrapin crossing” sign along the road. This is to tell drivers to be aware, because terrapins may have to cross roads to get to nesting areas and are often hit by cars.

When roads, houses, and other buildings are built along the coast and in salt-marshes, terrapin nesting areas are lost.

Diamondback Terrapin Craft

Copy or download the page and color the turtle. (Do not cut or color the turtle in the book!) Cut out along the heavy black lines and cut along the heavy lines for the "darts" - see arrows. Fold the "dart" area so that the grey is hidden and tape or glue shut. See smaller illustration for reference.



Average adult size range (females are larger): 4 to 9 inches