

Northern Diamondback Terrapin

Northern Diamondback Terrapin - Pl.4

(*Malaclemys terrapin terrapin*)

Identification: Adult female 6" - 9 3/8"; male 4" - 5 1/2". The Northern Diamondback Terrapin is found exclusively in salt marshes and other brackish-water habitats. The carapace is low and keeled, and wider towards the hind legs than the front. This species is highly variable in coloration: even siblings from the same nest may be widely divergent in appearance. Carapace color varies from light brown or light gray to dark brown or black. The lighter individuals have concentric rings or ridges on each scute. The hingeless plastron is orange or yellowish to greenish-gray. The skin is either gray with numerous small dark spots, or dark with light spots, and some individuals may have a neat dark mustache.

Where to find them: The Northern Diamondback Terrapin prefers unpolluted brackish-water or salt-water habitats such as salt marshes, estuaries, tidal flats, and barrier beach lagoons.

When to find them: Late May through July, when females emerge onto sandy areas to lay eggs.

Range: The saltwater coast of the entire state.

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Key Features

- Skin: gray with dark spots or dark with light spots.
- Carapace: low & keeled; light brown, or gray to black.
- Plastron: hingeless; orange or yellowish to greenish-gray



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Excerpt from: Schwartz, V. & D. Golden, "Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey". New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife 2002.

Order the complete guide at - <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/products.htm>