

## **Terrapins** <sup>[1]</sup>

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"Diamondback East Coast Terrapin at the North Carolina Aquarium, Fort Fisher, NC., 110623. *Malaclemys terrapin*", 2011. Image courtesy of

by David Stick, 2006Flickr user Jerry Oldenettel.

<sup>[2]</sup>

See also: [Diamondback Terrapin \(from NC WINS\)](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

Terrapins, members of the tortoise order, are similar in appearance to many of the most common types of turtles. Best known of the North Carolina terrapins are the [diamondbacks](#) <sup>[3]</sup> (*Malaclemys terrapin*), which breed in marshy areas near the seacoast and were once a minor, though lucrative, part of the state's commercial fishing industry. [Diamondback terrapin soup](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, made with sherry and a thick cream sauce, was considered a delicacy in northern cities before the [Civil War](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

The first recorded commercial terrapin catch in North Carolina occurred in February 1849, when the keeper of the [Bodie Island lighthouse](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, using a specially designed dredge, caught 2,150 diamondbacks that he sold in Norfolk, Va., for \$400. By 1880 the total marketed yield in the state was 123,000 pounds, but thereafter the terrapin fishery declined, with only occasional catches reported after [World War II](#) <sup>[7]</sup>.

By the early 2000s, diamondbacks were threatened sufficiently by net fishermen and coastal development to be categorized as a "species of special concern." At the same time, the unique coloring and design on their shells has resulted in their being sought mainly by herpetologists and hobbyists.

### **References:**

R. E. Coker, *The Natural History and Cultivation of the Diamond-back Terrapin* (1906).

"Hardluck Terrapin," *Wildlife in North Carolina* 64 (February 2000).

### **Image Credit:**

"Diamondback East Coast Terrapin at the North Carolina Aquarium, Fort Fisher, NC., 110623. *Malaclemys terrapin*", 2011. Image courtesy of Flickr user Jerry Oldenettel. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/joldenettel/5883025850/> <sup>[2]</sup> (accessed July 25, 2012).

### **Additional Resources:**

Davidson Herpetology: [http://www.herpsofnc.org/herps\\_of\\_nc/turtles/Malter/malter.html](http://www.herpsofnc.org/herps_of_nc/turtles/Malter/malter.html) <sup>[8]</sup>

NC Diamondback Terrapin Conservation Network:  
<http://www.tortoisereserve.org/researchandconservation/ncterrapins/main.html> <sup>[9]</sup>

NC Wildlife Resources Commissin:  
[https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Profiles/diamondback\\_091611.pdf](https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Profiles/diamondback_091611.pdf) <sup>[10]</sup>

### **Subjects:**

[Wildlife](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

### **Authors:**

[Stick, David](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

### **Origin - location:**

[Coastal Plain](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

**From:**

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.<sup>[14]</sup>

1 January 2006 | Stick, David

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**Source URL:**<https://www.ncpedia.org/terrapins>

**Links**

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