

Maritime Aquarium Is Looking For Volunteers to Help Study Diamondback Terrapins

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Volunteers along coastal communities are needed by The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk to help collect data on a turtle whose population is of special concern in Connecticut, the diamondback terrapin.

— *an announcement from The Maritime Aquarium*

The Maritime Aquarium is recruiting volunteers to train for the “Terrapin Tracker” program, a special initiative whose goal is to better understand where diamondback terrapins live and to potentially add protective measures along coastal roads. Registration is open now for virtual trainings on March 23 and 29.

The diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys t. terrapin*) is the only turtle along the U.S. Atlantic Coast that spends its life in the brackish water of salt marshes and tidal creeks. They’re named for the diamond-shaped pattern atop their top shell. Females (at about 9 inches) are larger than males (about 5 inches).

Populations of the terrapins in Connecticut declined across the 1900s for several reasons, including unregulated harvesting for food, habitat loss, predation, boat propeller strikes, drowning in crab and lobster pots, and being hit by cars.

Climate change and sea-level rise are new threats. The terrapins were listed as a species of special concern in 2015 under Connecticut's Endangered Species Act.

In response, The Maritime Aquarium, the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), the Connecticut Department of Transportation and Western Connecticut State University have developed the “Terrapin Tracker” program to focus on one of the terrapin issues: road mortality, as females cross coastal roads in search of nesting areas.

Volunteers will be assigned a coastal roadway to monitor for terrapin mortalities once a week from April through August.