

Rare Animals of Louisiana

Diamondback Terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin

Rarity Rank: S2/G4

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



Identification:

- Carapace is between 10 and 14 cm in length for males, 15 to 20 cm for females, and generally black or brown with yellow or orange marginal scutes that turn upward
- Concentric grooves and ridges on coastal and vertebral scutes, often with concentric dark and light markings
- Central keel of plastron with conspicuous blunt dorsal spines
- Plastron yellow, often mottled
- Skin dark but most males and some females have a noticeable black “moustache” on upper jaw

Habitat:

- Restricted to saline or brackish habitats
- Seagrass beds, marshes and estuaries (especially those bordered by mangroves) are favored habitats

Food habits:

Fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and insects

Range:

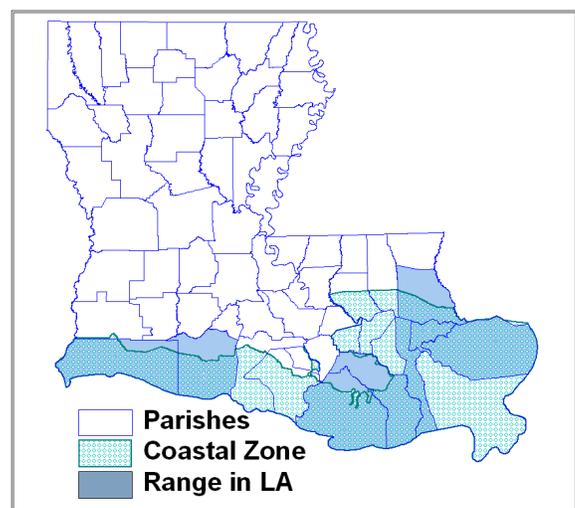
- There are seven recognized subspecies that range along the coast from Massachusetts to southern Texas or northern Mexico
- In Louisiana, barrier island marshes and seagrass beds on the bayside of the islands are important areas for the species

Reproduction:

- Females lay 4 to 12 eggs April through July
- More than one clutch may be laid annually
- Nests on mud or sand bars

Threats:

- Poor water quality (pollution)
- Human disturbance on nesting areas
- Loss of population in crab traps
- Habitat altered or lost by dredging and siltation
- Coastal land loss



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Beneficial Management Practices:

- Reduce siltation and sedimentation
- Reduce incidental killings in crab traps
- Derelict crab trap removal

LA River Basins:

Pearl, Pontchartrain, Barataria, Terrebonne, Vermilion-Teche, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

References:

Dundee, Harold A., and Douglas A. Rossman. The Amphibians and Reptiles of Louisiana. Louisville: Louisiana State UP, 1996. 187.

NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2006. Version 6.1 . Arlington, Virginia, USA: NatureServe. Available: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: June. 19, 2007).