



Diamondback Terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*)

- Diamondback terrapins are relatively small to medium sized turtles found in coastal and brackish water regions of the eastern and southern United States.
- Diamondback terrapins can vary greatly in color and pattern, and can have gray, brownish, or blackish carapaces with intricate ornate or diamond patterns on each scute. Skin color can range from grayish, brown, to whitish with black mottling, dots, streaks, and stripes.
- Diamondback terrapins are unique among chelonians in that in their indigenous ranges, tolerate, and can be found in brackish wetlands and other water bodies water (which contains a mixture of fresh and salt water).
- Sales of turtles under 4" in length are for bona fide educational purposes only.

Size

Adult Diamondback terrapins usually reach a carapace (shell) length of 5 ½ 9 inches, which females being larger than males.

Housing

Diamondback terrapins are semi aquatic and powerful swimmers as well as baskers. Provide a sturdy, escape proof aquarium or commercially available turtle tub of sufficient size with an elevated dock or basking area/access to dry land using a substrate dam. Provide a minimum of 10 gallons of space per inch of shell, or about 50-90 gallons for most adult terrapins. A powerful water filter rated at least twice that of the amount of water in the enclosure is highly recommended for aquatic turtles, as they are messy and require frequent cleaning and regular water changes. Use a submersible water heater with a guard to maintain water temperatures of 75-80 degrees F. Substrate is optional, and foregoing it makes for easier cleaning and maintenance, but small to medium sized gravel or crushed coral can be used. Additional rocks, logs, live or artificial foliage can also be provided for additional foraging and hiding opportunities.

Water salinity should also be considered when housing diamondback terrapins. Captive bred and born terrapins can usually be maintained normally in freshwater with very few to no issues. Wild caught specimens do need to be maintained at the correct balance of salinity, otherwise this species can become susceptible to shell rot and other husbandry related disorders. Some may choose to maintain captive born animals in brackish setups as well, in which case PH should be monitored in between 6.8 and 7.0. Additional overhead lighting and heating elements are also necessary to maintain optimal health and nutrition for diamondback terrapins. Provide a basking area or platform with UVB and UVA (as well as vitamin D3) for your terrapin to emerge completely from the water and monitor at around 85-90 degrees F.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, diamondback terrapins are primarily carnivorous, feeding on small fish, shrimp, snails, clams, and other aquatic insects and invertebrates. In captivity, diamondback terrapins can be given a variety of prey or food items including commercialized turtle pellets and diets, small feeder fish, freeze dried krill and brine shrimp, superworms, earthworms, mealworms, feeder roaches or crickets, and even small frozen/thawed pinkie mice (feed rodents sparingly though). A varied diet is important, and providing some additional vitamin D3 and calcium supplementation during 2-3 times weekly feeding also is beneficial.

Handling

Captive born and raised diamondback terrapins can become very tame and personable pets, often even approaching their keepers for food. Handling these turtles

from the rear of the carapace reduces the chances of being nipped or scratched when they are threatened, however.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****