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## Delaware Saving Turtles Brochure

Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife

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## Diamondback Terrapin

Diamondback terrapins are turtles that live in the Delaware Bay, the Inland Bays and most brackish rivers in Delaware – habitat they share with the blue crab. They spend most of their time in the water, but females come ashore in May and June each year to lay their eggs in sandy areas above the high tide line. Young terrapins spend the first couple years of their life in nearby wetlands.



Scott A. Smith, MD DNR

### Special thanks to:

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

### Cover photo by:

Jay Fleming

[www.jayflemingphotography.com](http://www.jayflemingphotography.com)

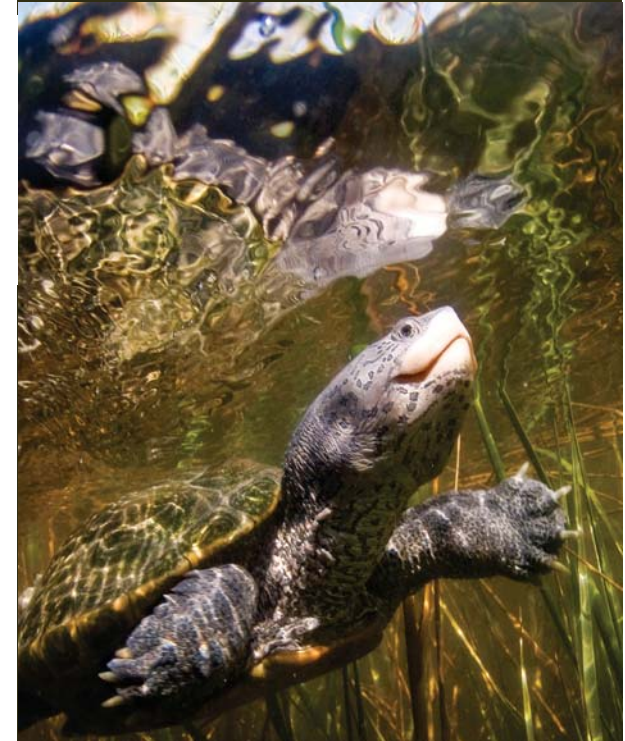
### To learn more about terrapins and their conservation, visit the following websites:

- Chesapeake Bay Program, [http://chesapeakebay.net/fieldguide/critter/diamondback\\_terrpin](http://chesapeakebay.net/fieldguide/critter/diamondback_terrpin)
- Diamondback Terrapin Working Group, [www.dtwg.org](http://www.dtwg.org)
- The National Aquarium, [www.aqua.org](http://www.aqua.org)
- The Terrapin Institute, <https://www.facebook.com/terrapininstitute>
- The Wetlands Institute, <http://wetlandsinstitute.org/research/diamondback-terraps/>



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# Going Crabbing?



## Save a Turtle!





George Grall, NAIB

## What's the problem?

The diamondback terrapin is a species of conservation concern in Delaware. They were trapped to near extinction at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of their popularity for turtle soup, but have since rebounded. These turtles now face threats including drowning in crab pots, boat collisions, road mortality and nest predators, as well as loss of beach nesting habitat to development and climate change.

## The terrapin desperately needs your help to survive.

Each year recreational crab pots unnecessarily claim the lives of terrapins. Terrapins are lured into crab pots by the same baits used to attract blue crabs. However, unlike blue crabs, terrapins must rise periodically to the surface for a breath of air. Terrapins trapped in a fully submerged crab pot will eventually drown.

## How can you help?

Recreational crabbers are legally allowed to set a maximum of two recreational crab pots in Delaware waters. Since 2001, Delaware fisheries regulations require that the entrance funnel of all recreational crab pots must be equipped with a crab pot turtle bycatch reduction device (TBRD), also known as a turtle excluder device (TED).

Developed by turtle conservationists, TBRDs are rigid rectangular inserts attached to the entrance funnels of crab pots to prevent large terrapins and other air-breathing animals from entering. TBRDs reduce unintended drownings without interfering with trapping legal-sized blue crabs. You can help by purchasing crab pots with TBRDs included or by adding the devices to your crab pots.

## Where do you get a TBRD?

Some retailers sell crab pots with TBRDs attached and others sell the devices separately. TBRDs can also be purchased directly from many tackle shops or constructed from 11-gauge galvanized wire.

## Will TBRDs prevent all terrapins from entering a crab pots?

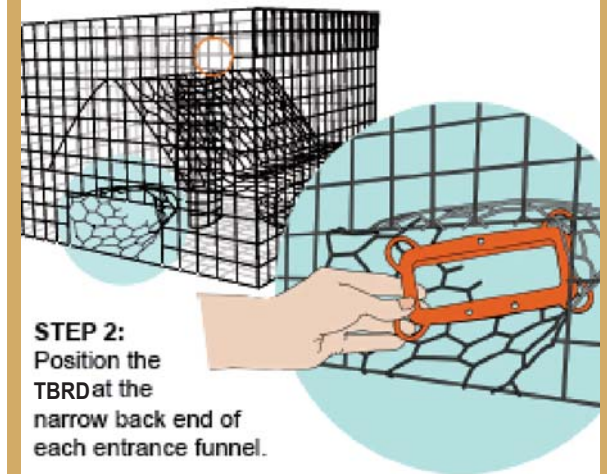
Unfortunately, some small terrapins will fit through the 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch TBRD. Making TBRDs any smaller will reduce the capture of legal-sized crabs. Checking crab pots a minimum of twice daily helps prevent small trapped terrapins from drowning.



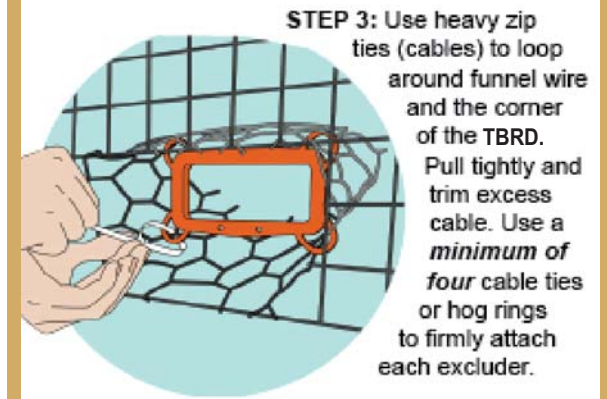
Scott A. Smith, MD DNR

## Installing a Turtle Bycatch Reduction Device (TBRD) on a crab pot.

**STEP 1:** Obtain a 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch TBRD (metal or plastic) for *each* funnel opening in the crab pot, along with heavy plastic cable ties. Hog rings or cable ties can be used to attach metal TBRDs.



**STEP 2:** Position the TBRD at the narrow back end of each entrance funnel.



**STEP 3:** Use heavy zip ties (cables) to loop around funnel wire and the corner of the TBRD. Pull tightly and trim excess cable. Use a *minimum of four* cable ties or hog rings to firmly attach each excluder.