



### **Diamondback Terrapin Volunteer**

Volunteers assist with finding, protecting, and monitoring nests of Diamondback Terrapins, a state Threatened brackish water turtle. Shifts can involve finding and protecting nests with wire cages, inventory of nests, raking nesting areas, excavating hatched nests, and processing depredated nests.

This program runs from June through September. The nesting season, Jun through July, and the hatchling season August through September. Two, one-hour, online or hybrid trainings are provided before each season starts. Shifts are 7 days a week, 8am and 5pm and are led by an experienced shift leader plus one or more additional volunteers.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Follow protocols for turtle handling and processing.
- Be prepared to be outside in all weather for the duration of your shift.
- Follow shift leaders' instructions and ask questions. Notify the shift leader in advance of any shift absences or conflicts.

### **Qualifications:**

- Interest in wildlife biology and conservation.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Good communication skills and attention to detail.
- Ability to work outside in adverse field conditions for 1-4 hours.
- Ability to walk or wade on sandy, uneven terrain for up to several miles.
- Ability to kneel on the ground while locating and processing nests.

### **Requirements:**

- Commitment of a minimum of one shift per week, 8am or 5pm.
- Participate for the full nesting and/or hatchling seasons.
- Reliably respond to email communications with staff.
- Ability to pass CORI/SORI background check.
- Must adhere to all policies in the Mass Audubon Volunteer Safety Handbook.
- Must be 18+.

### **Benefits:**

- Volunteer ID cards are issued to volunteers who work 50 hours or more per year. The Volunteer ID card provides free admission, for yourself and immediate family, to all of Mass Audubon's Wildlife Sanctuaries and a 15% discount at the Wellfleet Bay Gift Shop. It also allows you to take advantage of our Reciprocity Program which grants free or discounted access to participating area museums and attractions.
- Meet new people and share interests in nature.
- Volunteering in a fun and energetic environment!



### **Nesting Season Duties:**

(Early-June to late-July)

- Monitor all approved site locations for the presence of adult females, completed nests, and depredated nests.
- Nest protection.
- Verify nests by digging to top egg, then cover back up.
- Protect nests with wire enclosures, stakes, and nest identification tag
- Relocate imperiled nests as required.
- Accurately fill out a datasheet.
  - Respond to depredated nests:
- Verify nest by digging in chamber and collecting all egg shards in the vicinity of that nest chamber
- Collect egg shards and dispose of
- Accurately fill out a datasheet
  - Respond to turtle activity reported by visitors and staff.
  - Process adult females encountered.
  - Rake nesting locations as required to remove confusing signs of activity.
  - Maintain supplies in shift backpacks for use in the field.
  - Follow shift leaders' instructions and ask questions. Notify the shift leader in advance of any shift absences or conflicts.

### **Hatchling Season Duties:**

(Early-August to early-October)

- Excavate hatched nests and open nests at the direction of staff.
- Remove protective cage
- Excavate nest chamber while spraying hatchlings down with water for examination
- Healthy hatchlings get released during the shift, while under-developed hatchlings come back to the sanctuary's lab
- Examine other possible nest contents i.e., under-developed eggs
- Accurately complete the datasheet
  - Respond to depredated nests.
- Verify nest by digging in chamber and collecting all egg shards in the vicinity of that nest chamber
- Collect egg shards and dispose of
- Accurately fill out a datasheet
  - Perform an inventory of nest counts every shift.
  - Placement/retrieval of field equipment at monitored sites.
  - Rake nesting locations as required to remove confusing signs of activity.
  - Maintain supplies in shift backpacks for use in the field.
  - Follow shift leaders' instructions and ask questions. Notify the shift leader in advance of any shift absences or conflicts.



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **May I join for only a part of the season?**

We ask our volunteers to participate for the full nesting and/or hatchling season. If you need to miss an occasional shift, you are required to notify the shift leader and find a substitute as your replacement. Especially during peak season, full teams are imperative for a successful shift.

### **Do I have to be involved with both nesting and hatchling season?**

No, the two seasons have separate trainings and sign-ups, so you can participate in just one if you choose. It is more common for volunteers to participate in both seasons, so they can observe the process from start to finish!

### **What does the training entail?**

The training is a one-hour hybrid in-person/virtual training. It is recorded and is sent to everyone afterwards, so if you can't attend you can watch it later. There is no official in-field training, so you are expected to ask questions and learn from your experienced shift leaders.

### **What commitment is required?**

This program requires at least one shift a week, at either 8 am or 5 pm. Depending on the location you sign up for and the stage of the nesting or hatchling season, a shift can take 30 minutes to four hours. We also require a one-hour training for both nesting and hatchling seasons, which usually takes place a week or two before the start date.