



CONSERVE WILDLIFE

FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

Great Bay Terrapin Project Internship

Great Bay Blvd. Wildlife Management Area
Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey

February 9, 2015

Thank you for taking interest in our Great Bay Terrapin Conservation Project. This volunteer internship is meant to help educate deserving students who wish to protect the quality of our natural resources in the Barnegat Bay and Great Bay watersheds. The goals of the Great Bay Terrapin Conservation Project are to help reduce abnormally high mortality rates of northern diamondback terrapins from motor vehicles and to educate the public about the threats to the terrapin population in New Jersey.

PROJECT HISTORY

Since 2010 we've been engaged in the conservation of northern diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin terrapin*) in the Little Egg Harbor area. This year, the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ (CWF) seeks to continue to protect terrapins through additional conservation and education initiatives that include the installation and maintenance of barrier fencing, road patrols on Great Bay Blvd., and the continuation of this student internship.

Terrapins are a coast hugging turtle that live exclusively in brackish water. Habitat loss, mortality from being drowned in crab traps, and road mortality all pose major threats to the health of the population. Each year hundreds of terrapins are killed by motor vehicles throughout their range (Wood, et al. 1997). On Great Bay Blvd. in Little Egg Harbor scientific research has shown that road mortality may be depressing the local population of terrapins.

Road mortality is an unnatural cause of death for terrapins. During summer months, female terrapins exit the safety of their marine environment to find suitable nesting sites. These suitable nest sites are along the road shoulders of Great Bay Blvd. Terrapins nest in upland areas that have a loose gravel-like substrate that's above the mean high tide line. On some days, during the peak of their nesting season as many as 50 terrapins can be seen along the road. Two studies have pointed to road mortality as having a negative effect on the structure and health of the local population here. Both studies have called for conservation measures to be put in place to help stop the decline of terrapins in the area.

In 2015, our goal is to focus on conserving individuals (terrapins) through hourly road patrols and by educating drivers to be aware of terrapins. We're planning to expand and do more road patrols in Atlantic County on State Route 30, where we documented 50 road kills in 2014.

As a volunteer intern you will work with Ben Wurst, Habitat Program Manager to coordinate hourly road patrols to collect data on the local terrapin population. This unique opportunity is best suited for hard working individuals with experience working long hours in extreme conditions. There will also be opportunities to assist on other field projects in southern New Jersey.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Conduct hourly road patrols on Great Bay Blvd. in Little Egg Harbor, NJ and/or Route 30 in Absecon from mid-late May – late-July.
- Assist with the scheduling and management of several volunteer “Terrapin Stewards” that will help conduct road patrols.
- Educate the public about terrapins, our conservation efforts, and their threats in the environment
- Record sightings of live/dead terrapins along Great Bay Blvd and other roads in suitable habitat.
- Collect and record body morphometrics of live terrapins
- Help terrapins safely cross roads
- Collect injured and/or road-killed terrapins for egg harvesting and transportation
- Maintain barrier fence along Great Bay Blvd.
- Enter and summarize data in Excel and Google Earth.

TIMETABLE:

- Dates - May 15 – July 31
- Work 35-hour work week, weekends and holidays may be required during peak nesting times or times when volunteers cannot cover road patrols
- Goal is to cover roads on days when most people are out, especially weekends, holidays, and when terrapins are most active (full and new moons).

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Ability to work long hours in outdoor conditions
- All applicants must have a valid driver’s license, a good driving record, and the ability to adjust to varying schedules throughout the field season.
- Requires use of a personal vehicle for work (mileage reimbursable)
- Great communications skills
- Must be highly tolerant of prolonged sun exposure and biting insects

There will be some other opportunities to assist with different field work throughout southern New Jersey. Some field equipment will be provided. A list suggested equipment will be given to intern and they will be responsible for acquiring it.

EMAIL COVER LETTER AND RESUME BY MARCH 15, 2015 TO:

Ben Wurst, Habitat Program Manager

Email: ben.wurst@conservewildlifenj.org

References:

- Szerlag, S., and S. P. McRobert. 2006. Road occurrence and mortality of the northern diamondback terrapin. Applied Herpetology 3:27-37
- Wood, R. C. and R. Herlands. 1997. Turtles and tires: the impact of road kills on northern diamondback terrapin, Malaclemys terrapin terrapin, populations on the Cape May peninsula, southern New Jersey. Pages 46-53. In J. Van Abbema editor. Proceedings: Conservation, Restoration, and Management of Tortoises and Turtles--An International Conference. New York Turtle and Tortoise Society, New York, USA.