



CONSERVE WILDLIFE
FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

Great Bay Terrapin Project Internship
Great Bay Blvd. Wildlife Management Area
Little Egg Harbor Township, Ocean County, New Jersey

February 7, 2017

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 while learning wildlife management techniques. The goals of the Great Bay Terrapin Conservation Project are to document and reduce road 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 ongoing conservation and education initiatives by conducting road patrols, maintaining barrier fencing, and educating the public.

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 but are only a fraction of the threats that they face. Each year hundreds of terrapins are killed by motor vehicles throughout their entire range (Wood, et al. 1997). On Great Bay Blvd. in Little Egg Harbor Township, scientific research has shown that road mortality may be depressing the local population of terrapins. Over time it has caused adult females to become smaller and less numerous (Avisar, 2006).

Road mortality is an unnatural cause of death for terrapins. During summer months, female terrapins exit the safety of their aquatic environment to find suitable nesting sites. These suitable nest sites are often on the shoulders of roads. 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.

Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey

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In 2017, as in past years, our goal is to focus on conserving individuals (terrapins) through hourly road patrols during the day and night (with more emphasis on night this year) and by educating drivers to be aware of terrapins. In addition, we're planning to expand surveys to other roads where road mortality is significant. For example, Route 30 in Atlantic County, where we documented 50 road kills in 2014, 27 in 2015, and over 100 in 2016.

As a volunteer intern you will work with Ben Wurst, Habitat Program Manager to conduct and coordinate hourly road patrols to collect data on the local terrapin population. In addition to conducting patrols, our intern will continue a long term mark-recapture study on Great Bay Blvd. 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.
- Mark live terrapins by notching carapace.
- Collect and record body morphometrics of live terrapins.
- Help terrapins safely cross roads.
- Collect injured and/or road-killed terrapins for egg harvesting and/or transportation to rehabilitation and care facility.
- Maintain barrier fence using line trimmer/lawn mower along Great Bay Blvd.
- Enter and summarize data in Excel and Google Earth.

TIMETABLE:

- Dates - May 15 – July 31.
- Work ~24-30 hour work week, weekends and holidays may be required during peak nesting times or when volunteers cannot cover road patrols.
- Goal is to cover roads during high tide cycle and/or on days when most people are out, especially weekends, holidays, and when terrapins are most active (full and new moons, night time).

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QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be highly tolerant of prolonged sun exposure and biting insects.
- Ability to work long hours in hot 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
- Knowledge of GPS and data entry

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 20, 2017 TO:

Ben Wurst, Habitat Program Manager

Office: 609-628-2103

Email: ben.wurst@conservewildlifenj.org

References:

- Avissar, Naomi G. 2006. Changes in Population Structure of Diamondback Terrapins (Malaclemys terrapin terrapin) in a Previously Surveyed Creek in Southern New Jersey. Chelonian Conservation and Biology, Volume 5, Number 1. 154-159
- 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.

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