

North East Diamond Back Terrapin

Working Group, Meeting Minutes October 1st, 2011

10:31 AM

- Overview and welcome to meeting

Brief story of SoundWaters Education Center

Speakers: (Alisha Mullett and Leigh Shemitz)

- SoundWaters environmental research and educational research and education
- Research: Horseshoe crabs & Oyster growth; stewardship
- How the terrapin research started – 10 years ago
- 2007 – First terrapin sighting of hatchlings
- DBT became focal point in education
- Terrapin stewardship started after an injured female which had eggs was brought in (2010)
- Evidence that there was a nesting population in Norwalk, CT

Current Research:

- Observe nest sites and protect nests.
- Track predation, road mortality rates

Upcoming Research:

- Have more nest excluders, larger excluder
- Possible mark and recapture work in future

10:44 AM

- Introductions of participants

10:51 AM

Russ Burke – talks about the DBT Working Group

- National group meet every 3 years and may be meeting in South Carolina next year (more info later)
- “Terrapins are the coolest spp.”
DBTWG website is open to all and bibliography has PDF’s of papers of research on terrapins (LOTS)

- Sharing of information

10:56 AM

- Patricia Johnson – Buddhist Release – Life practice and its role in conservation of herps and a possible funding source.
- Re-habbers/ researchers working with Buddhists to educate community to make this practice more conservation friendly.
- Process: Re-habbers gave Buddhists animals to be released. Practitioners were not told the release site. (Turtles are very significant spiritually)

11:04 AM

Arick – Critter Cam Program

- Camera took Hi-def video of underwater activity of snappers for 8 hours.
 - Possible application to terps.
- Work on turtle culverts – 95% of turtle species tested only used culverts that had lighting sources
- Snapping turtle project – found one which survived without its lower jaw, possible siphoned vegetation. Found diet was 70% vegetation.

11:13 AM

- Barbara Brenessel – Cape Cod

Update since last national meeting. Wellfleet Education Center

Completed:

- Genetics studies, population clusters
- Paternity studies: about 52% of clusters fathered by 2 males

Ongoing:

- Mark and recapture, nest patrols/ protection.
- Turtle ‘gardens’, hatching patrol and continuity educational outreach: field school.

New Initiatives: 30 year mark and recapture data has started

1. To be entered into a computer database
2. Sonic telemetry to locate terrapins in a sediment to avoid mortality from an upcoming dredging project (Matt Bolus)

3. Harbor surveys for terrapin activity
4. Pre-restoration project of Herring River on Terp. Sites
 - Note: Terrapins seem to remember turtle garden nesting area note visible directly from shore of marsh
 - Propose to restore Herring River marsh area (restore tidal flow) and understand how area is utilized by terrapins.
 - Found over 40 depredated nest. Found terrapins foraging near 2 current housing developments.
 - Mapped terrapin activity locations.

11:30 AM

- Chuck Landry asks questions about hatchling movement
- Barbara & Russ – Burrow into mud, stay 1st year on land possibly more. Stay in marsh and keep away from water (hatchlings not very salt tolerant) in JB – move upland into vegetation

11:40 AM

- Diane – Land/ habitat acquisition and interesting source of funding is using shellfish recovery as a source of funding/ incentive to open areas where terrapins are. (Areas where habitat restoration projects are in planning)

11:43 AM

Charlie T. – Terrapin story – Village Creek.

- 40 Acre marsh was protected as a result of the Norwalk powerplant construction. Observed lots of Terrapin aggregations and nesting in area.
- Would like to do a community project to help protect nest. (Good site to start studies)
- Industrial sites may inadvertently be protected terrapin habitats

11:50 AM

2011 DBT protection and monitoring

Report – Wellfleet Bay update

Speaker: Kathleen

- Current data compared to last 5 years
 - 94 total nests found, 62 – protected, 4 – wild nests.

- Released 528 hatchlings this summer
 - Number of nests found has increased due to volunteer turnout

Note: Interest in what % of hatchlings in nest get predated by fly larvae and what spp.
Of flies (no real data)

Note: Would be good to have a model population monitoring project for citizens where the project is in accordance with state permit and collection criteria.

12:06 PM

LUNCH BREAK

1:17 PM

Meeting re-convenes

Talk on terrapin nesting activity

Sandy Neck Beach, MA Speaker: Kate Heslip

- Conservation and recreational are (off- road vehicles are allowed access)
- Large area, monitored sectiona of the known nesting areas in summer.
- Collect information about nests and the habitat they are in. Have GPS locations on nests and mark – recap info on females
- Over past 5 years – nesting period has increased and number of nests found has increased
- Interested in moving program toward understanding nest site selection for terrapins

1:40 PM

Engaging Students with Long Island Sound

Speakers: Kate Lowe, Lilia Salas, Arlyn Kilduff, Amy Arent

- How terrapins are being used in education
- Outreach in classrooms, on schooner and community year-round
- Give hands – on science to kids to foster conservation
- Camps, internships and after-school science for students K-12
- Inspire and engage children and adults to protect the Sound
- ‘The Terrapin Rap’

1:54 PM

Russ Burke Summarized NYS DEC Report and work at Hofstra

What are big issues in NY?

- They are a game species in NY
- Marsh Loss (what factors contribute?)

Lots of terrapin habitat around Long Island

- Jamaica Bay population (highest population in NY)
- Highly accelerated marsh loss (28% of original marsh left)
- 2004 – looked to find terrapins in illegal markets
- Info suggests some terrapins still make it out to markets for sale (took blood samples from 63 terrapins and found good portion came from NY)

Positive Outlook:

- Interesting info gained from on-going diet study, lots of variation from existing literature
- Hatchling work (ongoing)
- Nesting ecology work expanding to JFK airport
- Re-construction of runway 4A in JFK and barrier fencing plans to mitigate terrapin traffic on runways.

2:26 PM

- Paola D. discusses her population genetics work in JB and other sites around NY & NJ to understand population dynamics
- Try to understand paternity in various populations

2:30 PM

- Chuck Landry – asked if there was any new info on efficiency/ viability of head starting programs.
 - Russ Burke – no publishable research yet but work needs to continue to answer this question.
- Educational value of head starting hatchlings may go beyond actual value of this practice. Headstarting is good in terms of education and outreach.

2:44 PM

BREAK – Then walking tour of Cove Island Park

Meeting minutes written by Alexandra Kanonik

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11:50 AM