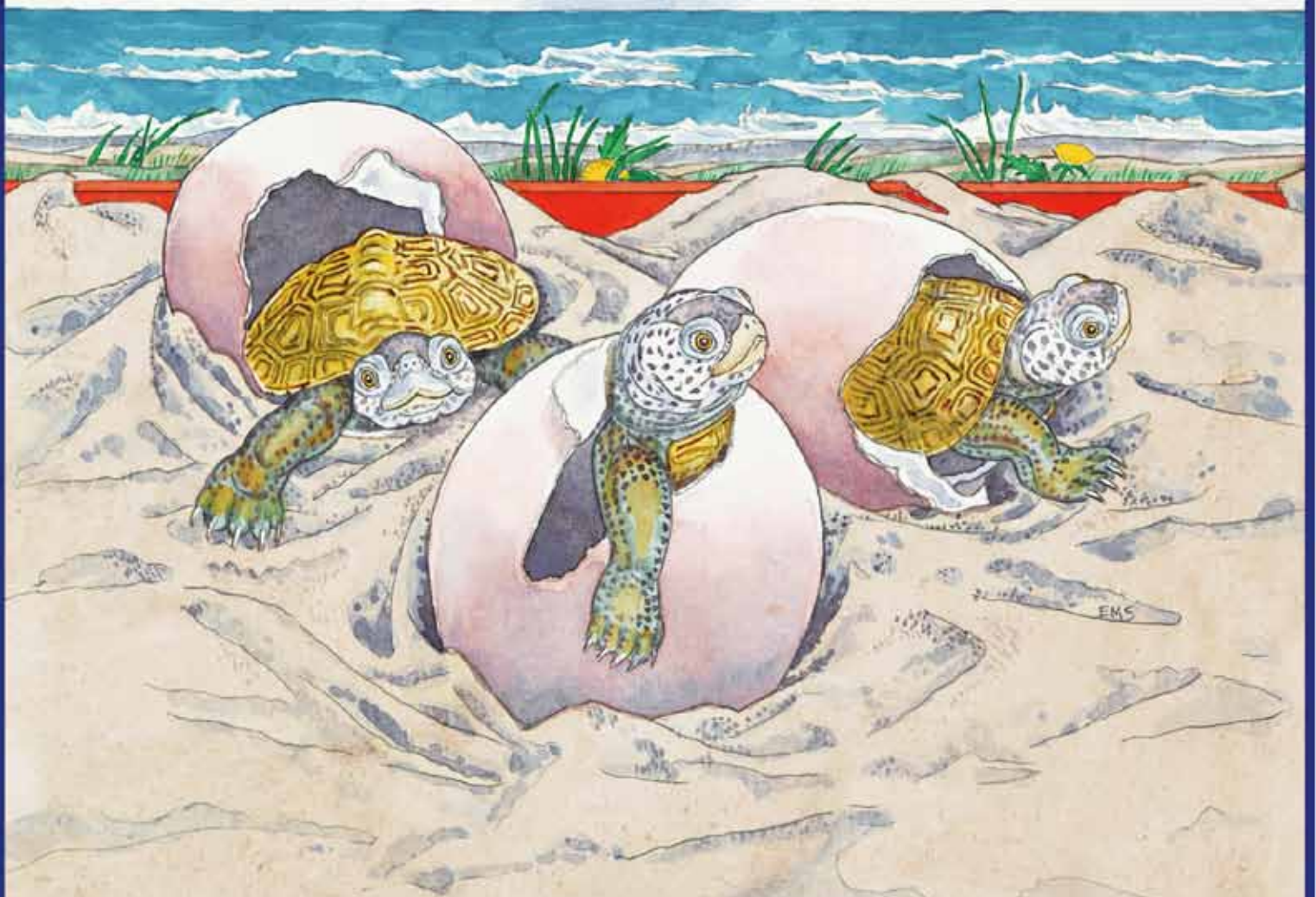


Turtles In My Sandbox



by Jennifer Keats Curtis

Illustrated by Emanuel Schongut

Turtles In My Sandbox

What would YOU do if you were to find turtle eggs in your sandbox? Join Maggie as she finds just that! She decides to become a “turtle-sitter” to help the baby diamondback terrapins. She watches them hatch and then raises them until they are big enough to fend for themselves. With the help of experts, she releases them in the bay where they belong.

It’s so much more than a picture book . . . this book is specifically designed to be both a fun-to-read story and a launch pad for discussions and learning. Whether read at home or in a classroom, we encourage adults to do the activities with the young children in their lives. Free online resources and support at www.ArbordalePublishing.com include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
 - Diamondback Terrapin Fun Facts
 - Diamondback Terrapin Life Cycle
 - Where in the World?
 - Diamondback Terrapin Craft
- Teaching Activities (to do at home or school):
 - Reading Questions
 - Language Arts
 - Science
 - Math
 - Geography
 - Coloring Pages
- Interactive Quizzes: Reading Comprehension, For Creative Minds, and Math Word Problems
- English and Spanish Audiobooks
- Related Websites
- Aligned to State Standards (searchable database)
- Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts! Quizzes
- Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels

eBooks with Auto-Flip, Auto-Read, and selectable English and Spanish text and audio available for purchase online.

Thanks to Jeff Popp, of the Terrapin Institute; Willem M. Roosenburg, Department of Biological Sciences at Ohio University and Joseph A. Butler, Department of Biology at the University of North Florida, co-chairs of the Diamondback Terrapin Working Group; and to Mary B. Hollinger, Oceanographer at NOAA for reviewing the accuracy of this book.

Jennifer Keats Curtis wants to help bring children close to the animals in their own backyards. By diligently researching her topic and interviewing experts, including children working to help preserve and protect local wildlife, the journalist has developed a knack for teaching young children about important ecological issues and what they can do to help. In addition to writing *Turtles In My Sandbox* and *Baby Owl’s Rescue* for Arbordale, Jennifer’s other titles include the award-winning *Oshus and Shelly Save the Bay*, and *Osprey Adventure*. Most days, Jennifer can be found among students and teachers, talking about literacy or conservation. She also regularly presents writing workshops to elementary school students. When she’s not in schools, Jennifer contributes to several magazines and serves as editor-at-large for Maryland Life Magazine. Jennifer and her family reside in the Annapolis, Maryland area.

Emanuel (Manny) Schongut is a prolific, multi-faceted freelance illustrator who works in children’s books, book covers, textbook illustration, editorial art, posters, and advertising art—essentially he does it all! In addition to illustrating Christmas Eve Blizzard and *Turtles In My Sandbox*, he has illustrated for Masterpiece and Mystery Theater, Public Television, New York Magazine, and New York Times Sunday Magazine. In addition to his own artwork, Manny taught reportorial art and figure drawing at Pratt Institute in New York for several years. He now illustrates and teaches in the San Francisco Bay area.

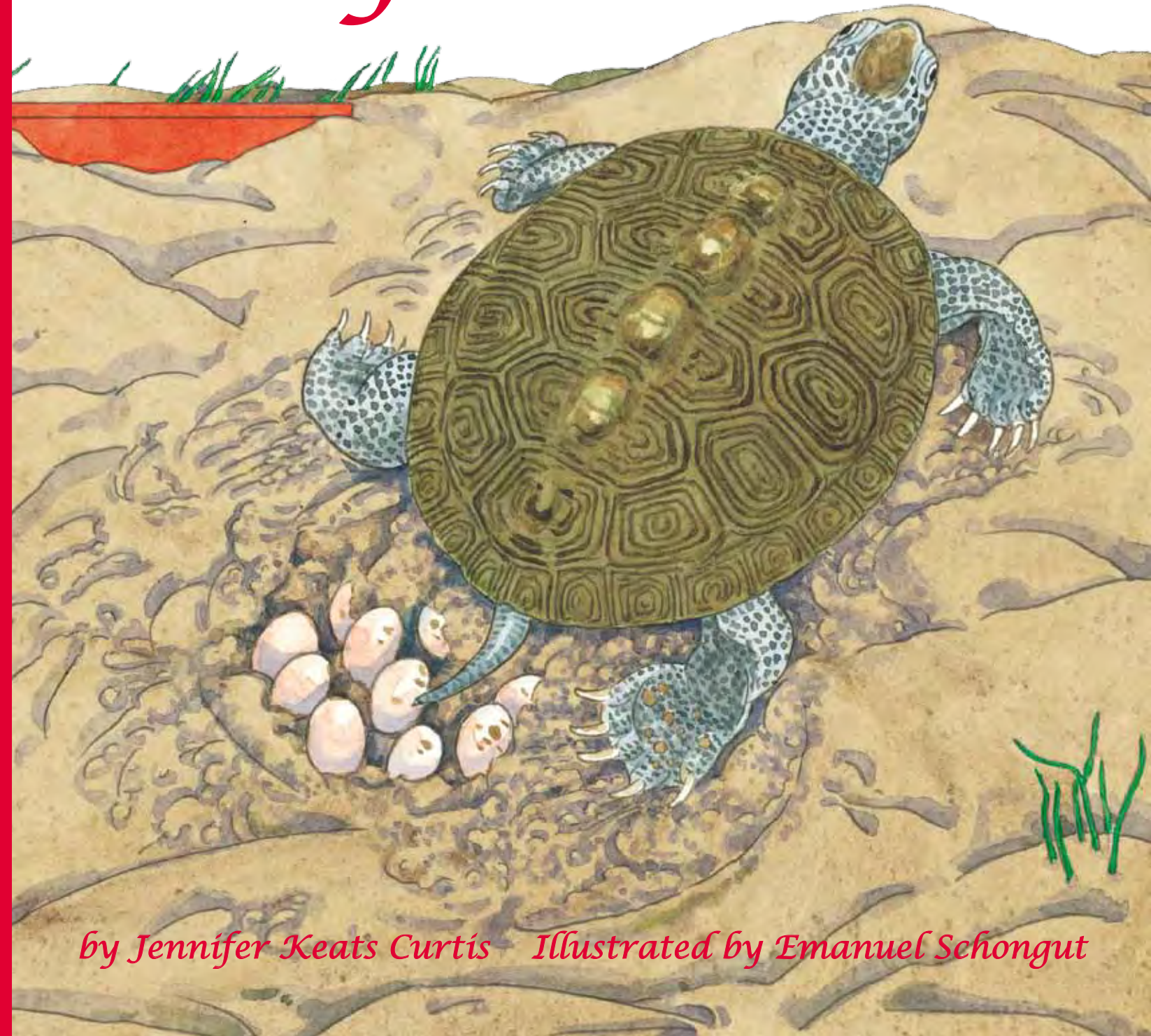


Jennifer Keats Curtis

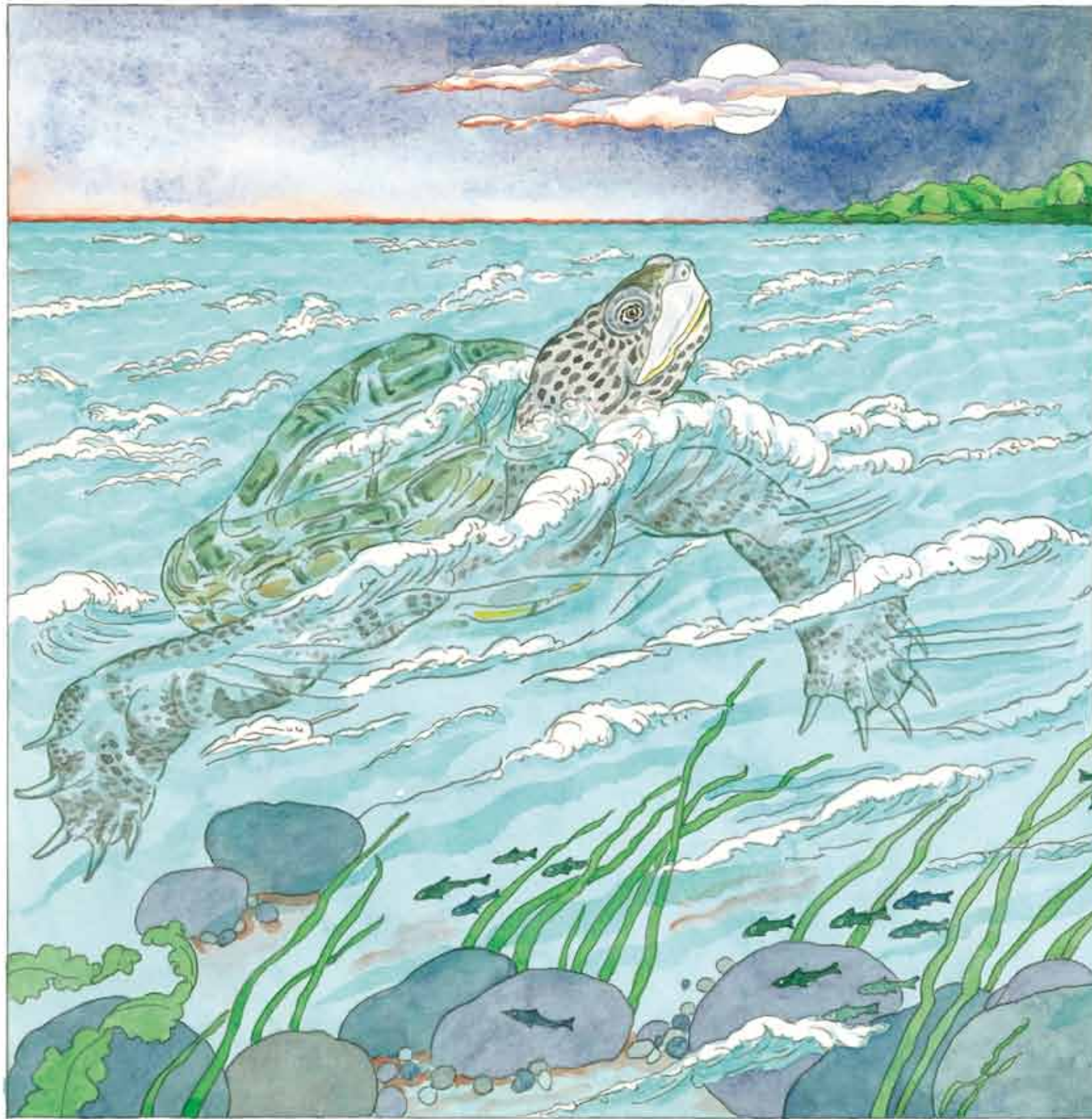


Emanuel Schongut

Turtles In My Sandbox

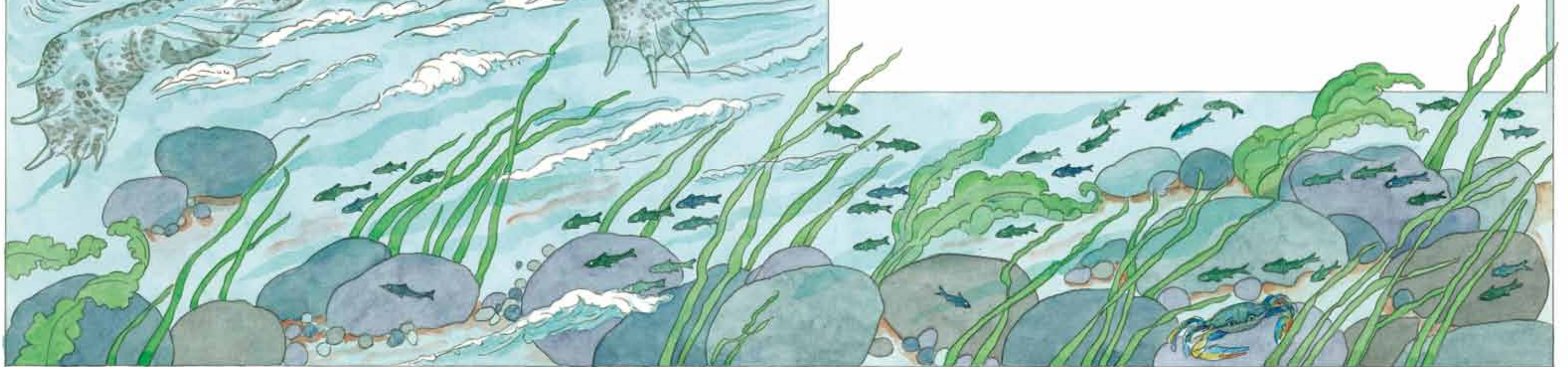


by Jennifer Keats Curtis Illustrated by Emanuel Schongut



Early one morning in June, Mama Turtle—a diamondback terrapin—silently swam along the bay's shore. Now and then, her head poked above the cool waves. Below the water, her webbed feet moved quickly. Her belly was full of eggs. She wanted to lay those eggs on the beach close to where she had been born.

Mama Turtle swam toward the shoreline. After checking for animals that might hurt her, she used her sharp black claws to pull herself out of the water and onto the muddy bank.

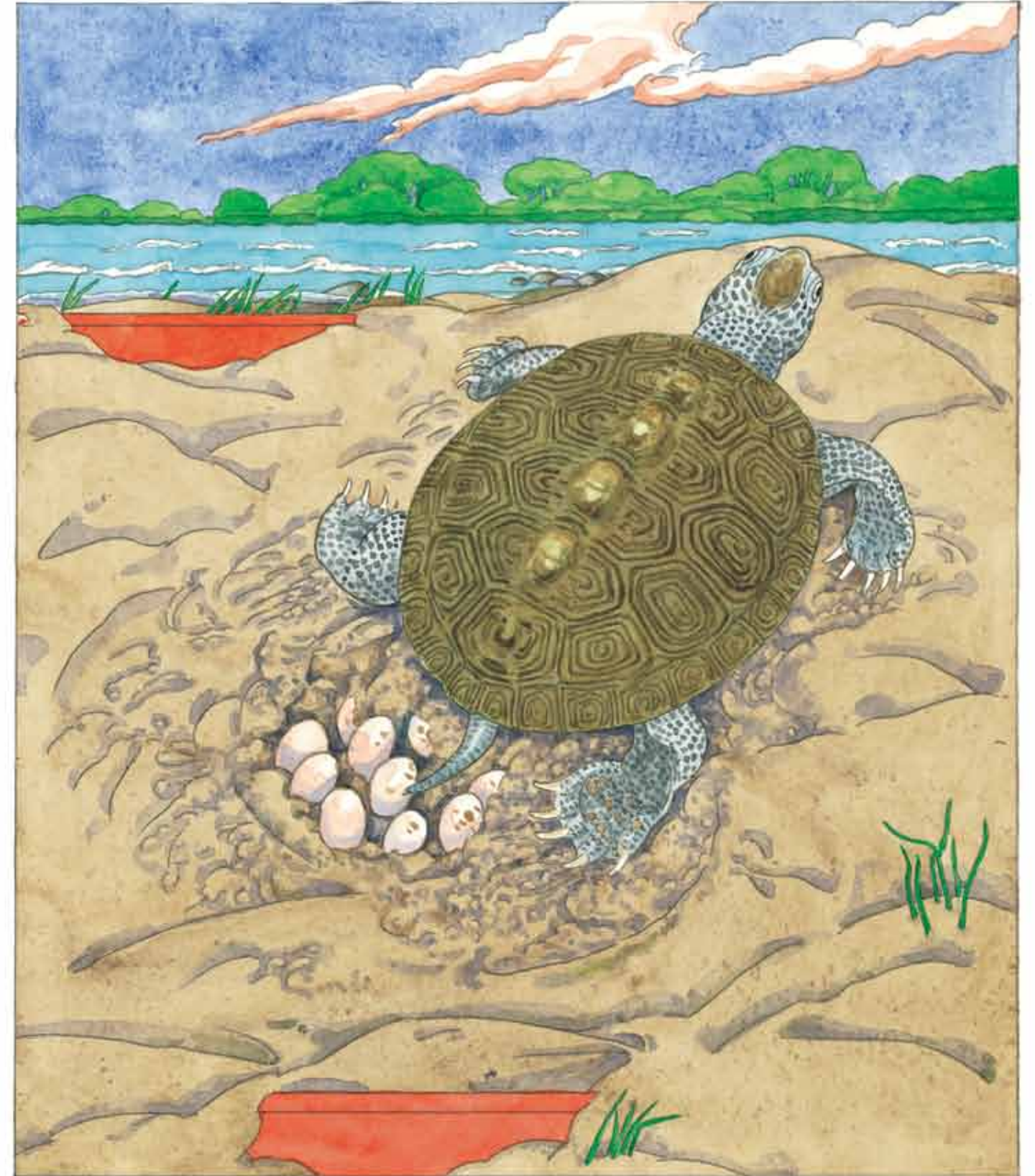


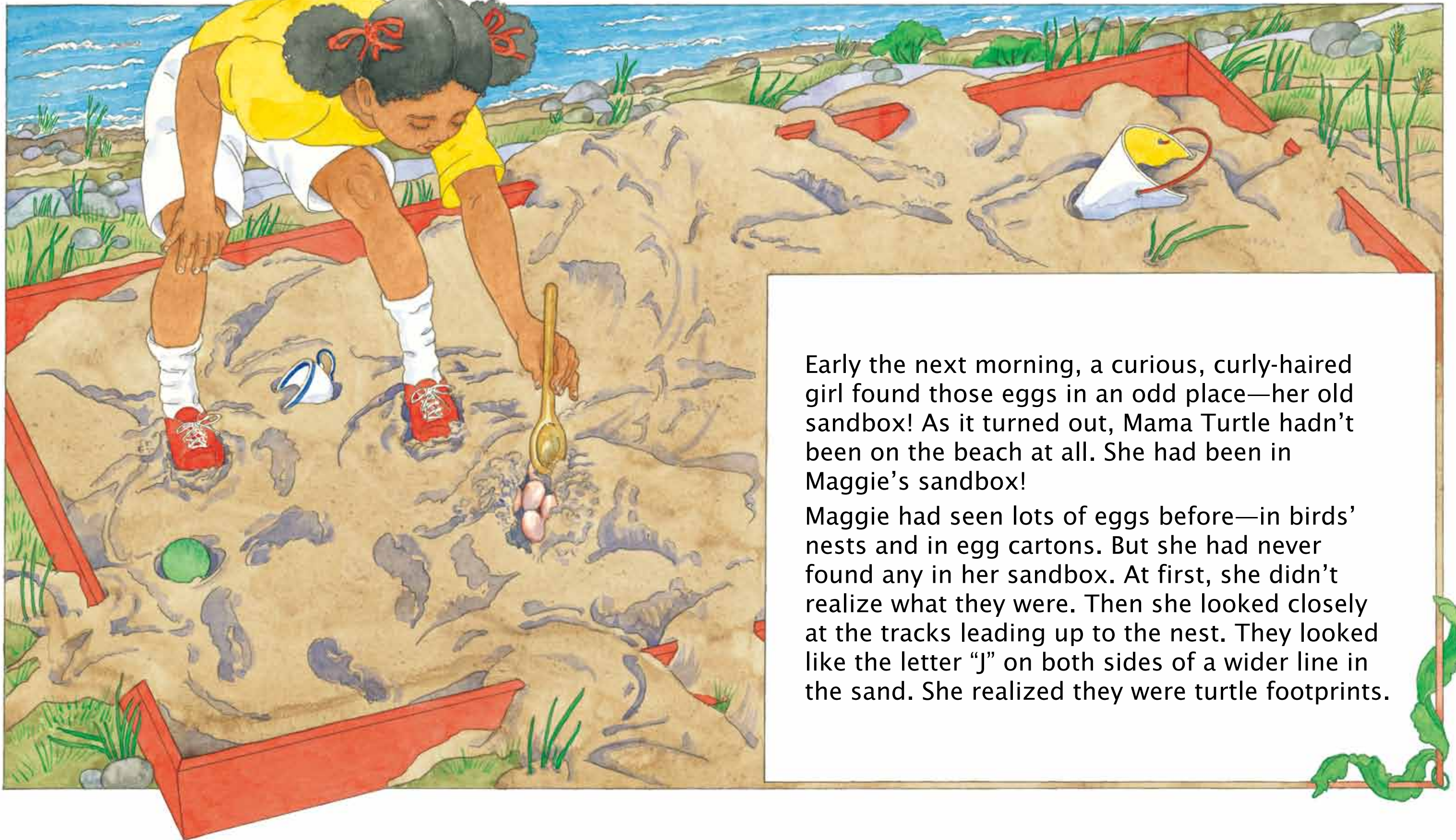


Mama pulled her round body over the slippery slope and up the steep bank. Her lower shell scraped the stubby grass as she made her way onto her nesting ground—the sand.

Using her strong back feet, she dug a teardrop-shaped hole by scooping the sand. First she used her right foot, then her left. She laid 10 pinkish-white, leathery eggs. Then using that same right-left motion, she covered the small eggs with sand.

Mama Turtle had done her best to hide her nest. She ambled back down the slope and slipped back into the bay. The only sign that she had been there were her funny-looking footprints.





Early the next morning, a curious, curly-haired girl found those eggs in an odd place—her old sandbox! As it turned out, Mama Turtle hadn't been on the beach at all. She had been in Maggie's sandbox!

Maggie had seen lots of eggs before—in birds' nests and in egg cartons. But she had never found any in her sandbox. At first, she didn't realize what they were. Then she looked closely at the tracks leading up to the nest. They looked like the letter "J" on both sides of a wider line in the sand. She realized they were turtle footprints.

“Mom,” Maggie called, “you’re not going to believe what’s in my sandbox!”

Maggie did not know much about baby turtles. She and her mom visited the aquarium and the zoo. They looked up websites. Finally, they called the Turtle Lady to ask what terrapins eat, when they sleep, or whether they would make good pets.

“Why was that turtle in my sandbox?” Maggie asked the Turtle Lady.



“Mama Turtle thought it was the beach,” explained the Turtle Lady. “She was lucky. Sometimes turtles and other animals can’t come ashore at all. People put up rocks or bulkheads so their beaches won’t get washed away.”

Maggie was happy that Mama Turtle had found a safe place to lay her eggs. But Maggie worried that other terrapins might not be so lucky. The Turtle Lady assured Maggie that she was just one of many people helping terrapins. She talked about a turtle-sitting program. Turtle sitters feed and protect the teeny hatchlings to give them a “head-start.” Sitters help the babies until they are big enough to fend for themselves in the wild.

For Creative Minds

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Diamond Terrapin Fun Facts

The word terrapin comes from the Algonquian Indian word *torope*, which means “edible turtle that lives in the brackish water.”



Diamondback terrapins are named for the diamond-shaped rings that appear on their top shells (carapace).

Female terrapins are much bigger than the males.



Webbed feet help them swim in the water, and the claws help them pull themselves on the shore.

Terrapins can pull their heads and legs into their bodies for protection. They don't close up completely like a box turtle.



Turtles do not have teeth; they do have strong enough beaks or jaws to bite through shells.

Head-started terrapins usually eat turtle pellets, but their diets can include cut-up worms, snails, and other foods that they would eat in their natural habitat.

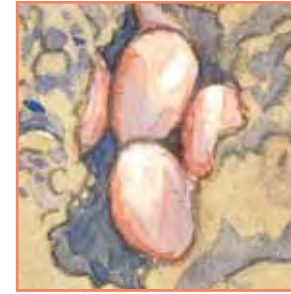


In the wild, diamondback terrapins eat periwinkles (snails), clams, crabs, and some marsh plants.

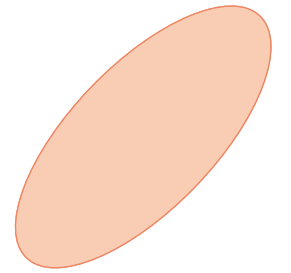
Diamondback Terrapin Life Cycle

Put the diamondback terrapin life-cycle events in order to spell the scrambled word.

P



Terrapin eggs are a rosy pink when they are first laid and gradually lighten in color. They are oblong in shape, about $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide.



T

Terrapins leave tracks that look like gigantic zippers as they pull themselves over the sand with their webbed feet with claws.



T



Terrapin mothers begin laying eggs when they are about 8 years old.

S



Hatchlings are only about the size of a quarter—one inch—when they are born.



R

For many species of turtles or terrapins, the sex (male or female) depends on the temperature in the nest. A warm temperature means females, and a cooler temperature means males.



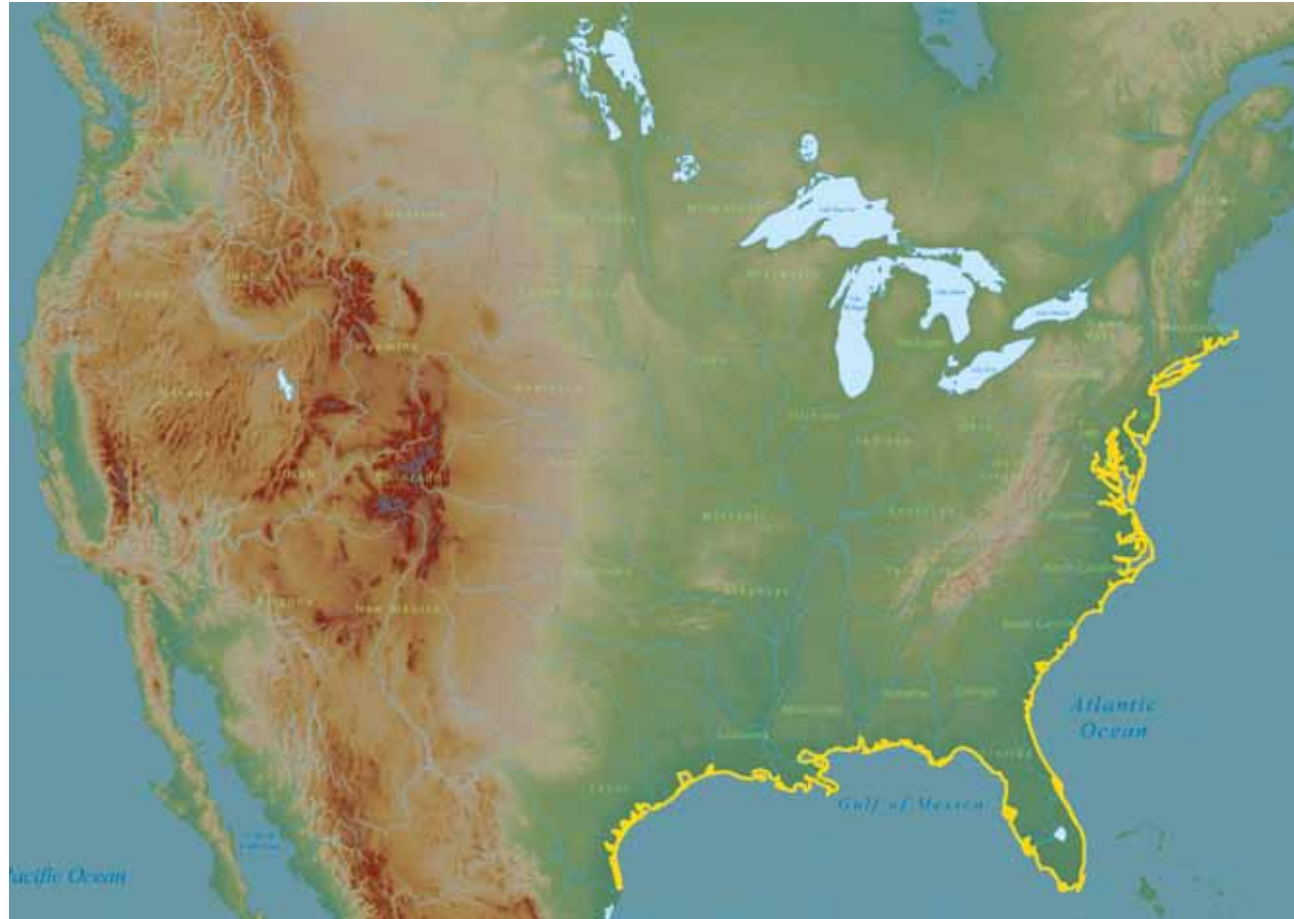
Answer: TERPS: Diamondback terrapins are Maryland's state reptile. The University of Maryland's sports teams are called the Terrapins (Terps for short).

Where in the World?

Diamondback terrapins are found in the brackish (somewhat salty) waters of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, from Massachusetts to Florida and westward to the Texas and Mexican border (shown by the yellow line on the map below).

They live in bays, lagoons, rivers, and marshes. Experts believe that diamondbacks are the only turtles in North America that live entirely in brackish water.

In what states might you find diamondback terrapins?



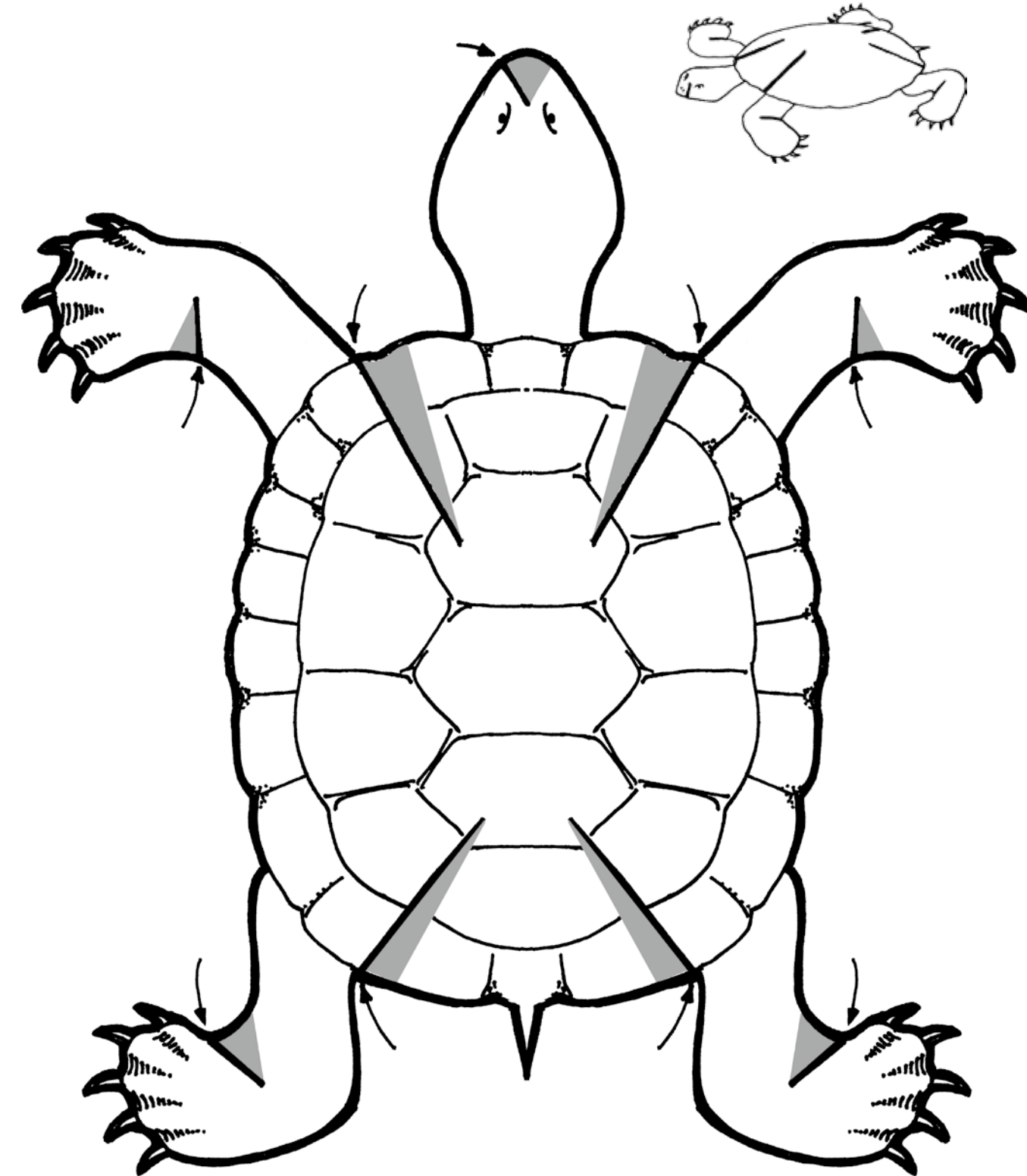
Diamondback terrapins used to be very common, but their numbers have declined in some areas. They are even considered endangered (at risk of disappearing from the earth) or threatened (at risk of becoming endangered) in some states.

To help protect them, some states now limit fishing or prohibit trapping and selling terrapins for food. In some areas, you might even see a “slow: terrapin crossing” sign along the road. This is to tell drivers to be aware, because terrapins may have to cross roads to get to nesting areas and are often hit by cars.

When roads, houses, and other buildings are built along the coast and in salt-marshes, terrapin nesting areas are lost.

Diamondback Terrapin Craft

Copy or download the page and color the turtle. (Do not cut or color the turtle in the book!) Cut out along the heavy black lines and cut along the heavy lines for the “darts” – see arrows. Fold the “dart” area so that the grey is hidden and tape or glue shut. See smaller illustration for reference.



Average adult size range (females are larger): 4 to 9 inches

This story is based on an actual program that allows students in Maryland to help wildlife experts protect and learn more about their state reptile—the diamondback terrapin. Terrapin Station was started by a woman affectionately known as Maryland’s Turtle Lady, Marguerite Whilden. This program is sponsored by a cooperative of private and public organizations; the Terrapin Institute, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the University of Maryland Biotechnology (UMBI), and the author of this book. To learn more, see www.terrapinbook.com. In addition, the Philadelphia Zoo and the Wetlands Institute in New Jersey in cooperation with The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, provide other programs to support and care for diamondback terrapins. Individual schools from Florida to Massachusetts have student projects to help terrapins or to monitor their nests.

The author donates a percentage of her royalties from this book to the Terrapin Institute.

Thanks to Jeff Popp, of the Terrapin Institute; Willem M. Roosenburg, Department of Biological Sciences at Ohio University and Joseph A. Butler, Department of Biology at the University of North Florida, co-chairs of the Diamondback Terrapin Working Group; and to Mary B. Hollinger, Oceanographer at NOAA for reviewing the accuracy of this book.

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Summary: Maggie finds turtle eggs in her sandbox and decides to become a “turtle sitter” to help the baby diamondback terrapins. She watches them hatch and then raises them until they are big enough to fend for themselves. Includes “For Creative Minds” section with terrapin fun facts and turtle habitat crafts.

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