

Inadvertent animal mortality

Human Health Risk

Ecological Risk **M**

Socioeconomic Risk **M**

Each year, animals are accidentally killed in large numbers due to traffic accidents, traps set for other animals, and as a result of nesting or other behaviors that are increasingly incompatible with human uses of their natural habitat. The risks associated with deer are discussed separately.

What's at risk?

Of particular concern is the diamondback terrapin, the only species of turtle in the United States that inhabits saltwater marshes. Once prized as a delicacy, terrapin numbers were so greatly depleted in the early 1900s that many states, including New Jersey, enacted protection policies that enabled terrapin populations to recover. No longer victims of overharvesting, terrapin populations are again threatened. Tens of thousands are unintentionally drowned in crab pots every year; another 1,500 are victims of traffic accidents.

What are the ecological impacts in New Jersey?

Excluding deer (addressed separately), there were about 18,000 animal-related traffic accidents in New Jersey during 1999. Shoreline development and associated erosion protection measures can destroy existing terrapin nests and force nesting females to venture into densely settled areas to lay their eggs. Hatchlings can become trapped in tire tracks in the sand and die before reaching the water.

What are the socioeconomic impacts in New Jersey?

Aesthetic and psychological impacts are likely, but they are expected to be fairly low. The costs associated with animal-related vehicle accidents are estimated at more than \$16 million per year. Additional dollar costs are associated with terrapin rescue and management, but these have not been estimated.

What's being done?

Two promising management approaches may help combat the decline of terrapin populations. The "Life After Death" program rescues potentially viable eggs from freshly killed females; 30-50% of the rescued eggs become hatchlings. Another tactic is to increase the use of a "Bycatch Reduction Apparatus," a device that prevents 90% of terrapins from entering crab pots.