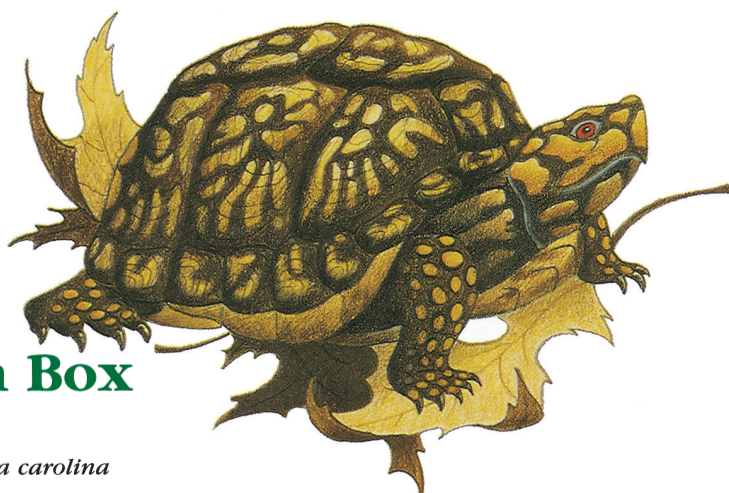




Habitat. It likes large waters. Deep ponds, lakes, rivers and streams are potential homes for the redbellied turtle. Dense aquatic vegetation is a must where its habitat is concerned. Where populations still exist, it might be seen basking on a favorite sun-drenched rock in company with painted turtles, a close cousin. The redbellied turtle, however, is the much larger of the two.

Reproduction. The redbellied turtle nests in June or July, preferring a sandy loam in which to dig its four-inch-deep nest. This frequently occurs in cultivated ground, especially if it is located next to water. Eight to 20 elliptically shaped eggs are laid in the cavity, and once safely deposited are usually covered. The eggs hatch in 10 to 15 weeks, producing colorfully marked hatchlings one to two inches long. The newly hatched reptiles may spend their first winter in the nest.

Food. The redbellied turtle is largely a vegetarian, although it may vary its diet with prey from its watery environment. An assortment of aquatic vegetation provides a feast, but snails, crayfish and tadpoles also supplement the menu.



Eastern Box Turtle

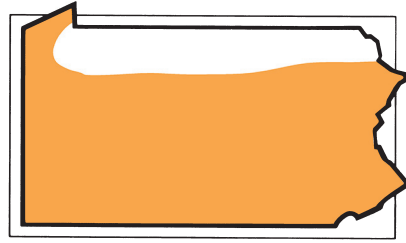
Terrapene carolina carolina

General characteristics. Because it is primarily a terrestrial animal, the box turtle is perhaps the one turtle species most often seen in its range. Many people have had the opportunity to identify a box turtle because it occurs in urban as well as suburban areas. It usually moves about in the early part of the day or soon after a summer rain. The eastern box turtle reaches an average shell length of just over four inches to as much as six inches as an adult.

Identification. The carapace of the eastern box turtle is high-domed and keeled. Color and patterns vary greatly, but black or brown are probably most often seen, with markings of yellow, orange or olive. The sharply rising dome-shaped upper shell is a good identifying characteristic. The colors on the plastron are quite varied. Markings may range from yellow-orange to olive, on a tan, brown or black background. The plastron has a single broad, movable hinge that allows the box turtle to close it tightly against the upper shell. It thus becomes effective protection from predators or other disturbances. The male usually has red eyes, and the eyes of the female are normally yellowish brown. The upper jaw ends in a down-turned beak (See Figure IV-1).



Range. The eastern box turtle inhabits an area encompassing a large segment of the eastern states. It extends from the lower New England states to Georgia and west to Tennessee and Illinois. It inhabits a large portion of Pennsylvania. It resides over most of the southern two-thirds of the Commonwealth. Its range in the west also reaches northward into the Lake Erie Basin.



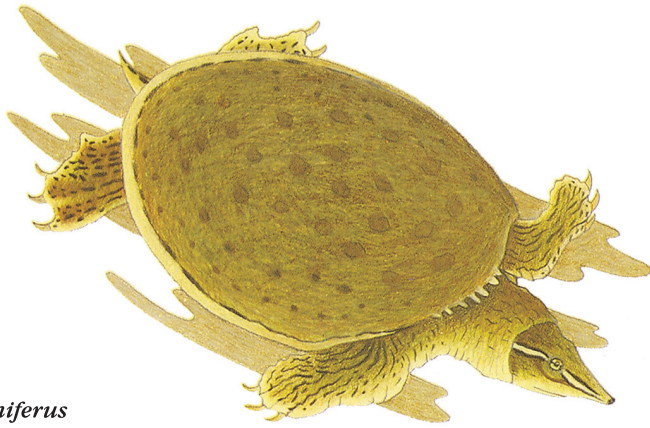
Habitat. Although essentially a terrestrial animal, the box turtle enjoys soaking for hours at a time in wet mud or water. It likes moist, forested areas but does not insist on woodlands, and often can be seen in wet meadows or flood plains. During the hot, steamy months of summer, the box turtle actively seeks out a swampy area where it burrows in the cooling retreat of logs or rotting vegetation.

Reproduction. The eastern box turtle matures in five to seven years. Nesting activity takes place in May to July when three to eight eggs are laid. They are elliptical and thin-shelled. The eggs, which average just over an inch in length, are placed in a deep cavity that may have been dug in the soft earth of a cultivated field.

Food. The box turtle is omnivorous and enjoys a widely varied diet consisting of all kinds of vertebrates and invertebrates and carrion. It also feeds on an assortment of wild fruits and berries.

Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle

Trionyx spiniferus spiniferus



General characteristics. The eastern spiny softshell turtle is a completely aquatic reptile, leaving the water only to deposit its eggs or on occasion to bask on a sun-baked log or the shoreline. Even then, it suns itself only in an area that provides quick access to the water. It might also be seen atop a mass of floating debris, soaking up the warming rays of the sun. In shallow water, the softshell turtle has a habit of lying buried in the sand or mud with only its eyes and snout exposed. By extending its long neck the nostrils can reach the surface to take in air. Thus, the softshell turtle is able to soak itself in this manner for extended periods. The softshell turtle is able to move fast