

Snapping Turtle



What does the snapping turtle look like?

A snapping turtle can be recognized by its size, muscular limbs and long tail, or by the sawtooth back edge of its carapace (shell). Snapping turtles are greenish-gray or dark green because of algae growing on the carapace. Underneath, the plastron is much smaller than the carapace, so this turtle cannot protect itself by drawing into its shell. It looks like a size 10 turtle in a size 6 shell! This, plus its slowness on dry land, explains the snapper's aggressive behavior when threatened - it cannot run or hide, so its only defense is attack. If bothered, it will lunge forward with a neck that can reach halfway back to its tail, and cause a painful bite. In water, snappers are shy of humans and will swim away quietly. They only come out on land in late June and early July to dig a nest and lay eggs. Leave them alone.

What type of habitat does the snapping turtle like?

Snapping turtles are usually found near muddy lakes, ponds, and slow-moving rivers. Snapping turtles are great swimmers and use their powerful webbed feet to pull through the water.



What do snapping turtles eat?

Snapping turtles prefer dead, but not rotting, fish. They also eat crayfish, toads, frogs, fish, aquatic insects, terrestrial insects, and muskrats. Adults and juveniles have also been observed gulping algae and duckweed on the water's surface. Adult snappers have few predators; humans are the primary ones.



What are the mating habits of a snapping turtle?

Snapping turtles lay 30 to 40 eggs. The eggs are the size of a ping-pong ball. The eggs hatch in the early autumn. Baby snapping turtles have many predators that may eat them before they hatch. These include: herons, hawks, crows, large fish, raccoons, snakes, and other turtles.



Here is a cool fact about an alligator snapping turtle.

Alligator Snapping turtles have a fleshy protuberance on their mouth that looks like a worm and acts as a lure for live prey. Sometimes snapping turtles will go fishing with this worm-like mouth and a moment later, there will be one less fish in the pond.

Can you see the worm-like protuberance in the mouth of this alligator snapping turtle?



Can snapping turtles be harmful?

Snapping Turtles can be harmful. While in the water snapping turtles are very shy. But on land they are very aggressive and will attack with a painful bite.



A few interesting facts about snapping turtles.

- A snapping turtle can weigh up to 45 pounds.
- Snapping turtles can live for 30 to 40 years.
- A snapping turtle will sometimes release a foul odor from a gland on the underside of its body.