

Turtle TRICKERY

Turtles are unique. Can you name another critter with such a shell? Some animals have tough, leathery skin, like the armadillo. Others have heavy scales, like an alligator. But none has a covering as unusual as a turtle's shell. And it isn't just the simple outside cover that it appears to be. *Can you guess which body parts make up the shell?*

If you guessed spine and ribs, you were right. There is no trick here. A turtle's shell is nothing more than an external spine with fused ribs. Peek under a turtle shell and you'll notice that those "ribs" look more like bony plates. These bony plates are covered with scutes.

Turtle tidbit:

Did you know that Native Americans also found turtles to be unique? They referred to their world as "turtle earth." Turtle shells were used as rattles in sacred ceremonies. They were even used as bowls or cups!



Eastern box turtle—*Terrapene carolina carolina*



Common snapping turtle (juvenile)—*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*



Stinkpot turtle—*Sternotherus odoratus*