

COMMON TURTLES

WATER TURTLES

SNAPPING TURTLE

This turtle is Pennsylvania's largest turtle. They have long tails and big jaws and can snap very hard! This turtle's plastron is small. It is so small that the turtle cannot pull itself into its shell. They like to spend a lot of time in the water and will frequently walk along the bottom of a lake looking for a meal. This is a turtle that many people like to catch to make turtle soup.

During warm days in June, you might see snapping turtles crossing roads and sometimes in backyards, looking for a place to nest. They are vulnerable on land, so they often become defensive. Be careful with these turtles—they bite. Stay a safe distance from a snapping turtle's head.

Painted turtles, such as the midland painted turtle (below), are often seen sunning themselves on a large rock or log.



Map turtle

PAINTED TURTLE

Pennsylvania has both the midland painted and the eastern painted turtle. They are very colorful with bright-yellow spots and strips on the sides of the head, and red markings on the edge of their shells. Painted turtles are fond of basking.

STINKPOT TURTLE

This turtle is Pennsylvania's only musk turtle. It is not often seen because it spends most of its time in the water. If disturbed, this turtle will produce a foul-smelling fluid, which is one reason it is called a "stinkpot." Although it is small, it is said to have a short temper and strong bite.

MAP TURTLE

This turtle gets its name from the random pattern of yellow-orange lines across its upper shell. It gives the appearance of the roads on a map. Map turtles like to live in slow-moving waterways or lakes that have a muddy bottom. It is the first turtle to come out of hibernation in the spring in Pennsylvania.

RED-EARED SLIDER

This turtle is greenish with red stripes ("ears") on the sides of its head. This turtle is from the southern United States, not from Pennsylvania. It has come into Pennsylvania by way of pet owners who no longer want them.

These people release the sliders into Pennsylvania ponds, lakes and streams. Red-eared sliders compete for food, basking areas and nesting sites with other Pennsylvania water turtles. It is illegal to release turtles bought in a pet store into Pennsylvania waterways.

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LAND TURTLES

EASTERN BOX TURTLE

This turtle has a high-domed shell and can be black or brown with yellow, orange, and olive markings. The box turtle has a hinged plastron, making it able to pull itself into its shell and close up, or "box" up tightly. Box turtle males usually have red eyes. Female box turtle eyes are normally brown.

WOOD TURTLE

"Old red legs" is Pennsylvania's second most terrestrial turtle. This nickname comes from its reddish-orange legs, neck, and tail. This turtle has a beautiful wood-grained look to its upper shell.

Although a land turtle, the wood turtle is very much at home in the water, seeking habitats that include marshy meadows and cool streams.



The wood turtle (left) is very much at home both on land and in the water.

SPOTTED TURTLE

This small turtle likes to bask on clumps of grass and is more often seen during spring than during other times. The spotted turtle's upper shell is black and is scattered with many round yellow spots.

Female spotted turtles have orange eyes and a yellow chin. Male spotted turtles have brown eyes and a tan chin.



The spotted turtle (above) is sprinkled with round yellow spots that vary greatly in number from one turtle to another.

A box turtle's shell (below) has a high dome.



The eastern box turtle (right) is one of the most common turtles in Pennsylvania.

