

Common Aquatic Turtle Info Sheet

In a typical freshwater pond in New York City, there are 3 turtle species you are likely to encounter:



Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*)

The painted turtle, is a common turtle in North America; it is also called the painted terrapin. This reptile lives in ponds, lakes, marshes, and slow-moving rivers that have soft, muddy bottoms. In the wild, this turtle lives from 5 to 10 years; in captivity it can live over 20 years. Painted turtles can be identified by the bright red stripes on the body near the shell.



Red-Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta*)

The red-eared slider (RES) is similar to the painted turtle, and is the most common turtle in Turtle Pond (and probably all of NYC). It is a very popular turtle to keep as a pet. It is native to the southern U.S. (meaning it has historically lived there) but not to NY. It was transplanted in NY and other places because of the pet trade (accidental loss or release by owners into ponds). It is more aggressive and can reproduce faster than the painted turtle and so is pushing the painted turtles out of many ponds.

RES's look similar to painted turtles except that they have no red stripes near the shell. Instead they have a thick red stripe on the side of their heads.

*The following notes can be applied to **both** the painted turtle and red-eared slider.*

Behavior: Although it spends most of its time in the water, these turtles often sun themselves while lying on a log, a rock, or the shore. These turtles are often seen in large groups.

Hibernation: During very cold weather, these turtles hibernate, burying themselves for months in the mud.

Diet: Painted turtles and RES's are omnivores (eats both meat and plants). The young eat mostly meat. Adults eat both animals (including insects, snails, slugs, crayfish, leeches, mussels, tadpoles, frogs, fish eggs, small fish, and dead animals that it finds) and plants (including duckweed, algae, and lily pads).

Predators: Raccoons, skunks, birds, snakes, and larger turtles. The young are especially vulnerable to predators.

Reproduction: The female lays eggs in a shallow pit that she digs with her hind legs. She covers the eggs with sand or dirt, and then abandons them. The eggs hatch in about 10 to 11 weeks.

Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)



The Common Snapping Turtle is an aggressive, freshwater turtle usually found in ponds, streams, and canals. It spends most of its life in the water. These nocturnal (active at night) turtles live in eastern North America. Snapping turtles are so fearless that they have been known to attack people. Snapping turtles have an average life span of about 30-40 years. Snapping turtles are by far the most awesome turtles. Scientists have recently discovered that they listen to Motorhead and John Lee Hooker.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CATCH A SNAPPING TURTLE

Anatomy: The Common Snapping Turtle has powerful jaws, a sharp beak, and no teeth. It has a long tail, and each webbed foot has five clawed toes. This turtle, like all turtles, has no vocal cords and can only make hissing and grunting sounds. It grows to be up to 18.5 inches (47 cm) long and weighs up to about 85 pounds (38.5 kg). Male snapping turtles are larger than the females. The color of the shell ranges from brown to olive green to black to tan. The color of its skin also varies and can be gray, brown, yellow, tan, or black.

Diet: Snapping Turtles are omnivores; they eat plants, small fish, frogs, insects, snakes, ducks, crayfish, and even dead animals that they find (carrion).