

Turtle, Eastern Box

Scientific Name: *Terrapene carolina carolina*

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Family: Emydidae



Adult length is between 4 and 8 1/2". High-domed, keeled shell may be yellow, orange, olive, black or brown and may have a pattern. Plastron may be tan, dark brown, yellow, orange or olive and may have blotches of color. It is hinged and as long as the carapace, allowing a tight fit when the animal retracts. Males have red eyes, female eyes are yellow-brown. They have short, web less fingers; a small, well developed brain and well developed senses of hearing and smell. They are able to distinguish among colors.

Range

New Hampshire to Georgia and west through Tennessee, Illinois and Michigan

Habitat

Coastal marshes, moist or dry palmetto, pine or deciduous forests, damp or dry fields

Gestation

Up to 1 year

Litter

3 to 8 eggs

Behavior

They have terrestrial habits generally but also spend time each day soaking in mud or water. In hot, dry weather they burrow under a log or in rotting vegetation. Rain brings them out in large numbers. They are slow moving but avid diggers, changing burrows frequently during the summer. Normally, the male ranges about 330' from the nest and the female 370'. They hibernate in 15" to 18" deep holes. They swallow their food whole and need to swallow small stones to help with digestion. In captivity older males dominate younger males and all females.

Reproduction

They nest in May or June, laying elliptical, thin shelled eggs in a 3-4" deep flask shaped cavity. A female can retain sperm for a number of years, thus producing fertile eggs years after mating. New borns are the size of a 50 cent piece. They feed off the yolk attached to their navel, and grow 1/2 to 3/4" a year for the first 4 years.

Wild Diet

Omnivorous - slugs, beetle larvae & worms, vegetables, berries. The young are carnivorous; as they age, they become almost totally herbivorous.