

# Connecticut's Turtles

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Turtles are amazing reptiles and Connecticut is home to 12 different species, including four kinds of sea turtles. Turtles around the world need help! Over 45% of turtle species are threatened with extinction and in Connecticut 9 of the 12 species are listed as special concern, threatened or endangered. There are many reasons why turtles are in trouble but habitat loss, car strikes, collection, climate change and invasive species are the main culprits.

The majority of Connecticut's turtles are found in water, however there is one land turtle, the Eastern Box Turtle. Box turtles have the unique ability to close their shells, due to a hinge on their plastron (the bottom part of the shell). These hinged shells protect them from most turtle predators including raccoons and coyotes. They eat worms, slugs, fruit and mushrooms. Box turtles hibernate from October to April and can live up to 100 years!



Eastern Box Turtle



Northern Diamondback Terrapin Turtle

The Northern Diamondback Terrapin is another interesting turtle species. These turtles are usually found in brackish water (a mix of fresh and salt water) in salt marshes, estuaries and tidal creeks. They eat crabs, fish, clams, worms and are able to break through hard shells with their sharp beak. Terrapins have large webbed feet and are able to get rid of extra salt in their bodies through glands near their eyes.



Eastern Painted Turtle

The majority of Connecticut's turtles are found in freshwater. Eastern Painted Turtles are the most common and are usually found in ponds and lakes. Many people call them sun turtles as they are often seen basking on rocks and logs on sunny days. Female painted turtles are larger than the males. Females leave the pond in June to lay eggs, once the eggs are laid, they return to the ponds to allow the eggs to develop on their own. Many nests fall victim to predation by skunks, crows and raccoons. Eggs typically hatch after about 75 days and baby turtles will return to the ponds on their own. All turtles are born with a shell and can never leave it, the turtle's shell grows with them throughout their life.



Snapping Turtle

Snapping turtles are the largest freshwater turtle in Connecticut. They can weigh over 30 pounds and their carapace (upper shell) can be larger than 12 inches. The plastron (underside) is very small, which prevents the turtle from completely hiding in it. Snapping turtles prey mostly upon plants and fish, but can be aggressive, especially on land. If you see a snapping turtle on land, stay away and keep your pets away as well, the turtle will move on shortly. The most common reason to see a snapping turtle on the land is when the females lay eggs. Snapping turtles have amazing camouflage in the water, with dark greenish brown shells and algae growing on them.

You can help these fascinating reptiles by never collecting turtles as pets, having an adult help them across the road, watching out for them when doing yard work and never relocating turtles. Keep your eyes out for turtles this summer!



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Informational Text: 3-5.2, 3-5.3, 3-5.8