

SNAPPING TURTLE

Chelydra serpentina
Chelydridae, the snapping turtle family

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FACTSHEET INFORMATION

Summary of Invasiveness

- The Snapping Turtle inhabits many freshwater ecosystems, including marshes, ponds, lakes, rivers, and slow streams.
- Their tendency to be generalists, diverse food preferences, long life spans, and high adult survivorship make them competitive invaders.
- They have a high tolerance to cold temperatures, and may be seen crawling beneath the ice in the winter.

Diagnostic Characteristics

- The head is black in color, with notably large jaws.
- The upper shell varies from green and brown to almost black, with large jagged scales near the top and serrated scales towards the back.
- The lower shell is small and narrow, preventing the turtle from withdrawing inside.
- The legs are yellow in color and are very thick.
- The tail is yellow in color, nearly as long as the shell, and has saw tooth serrations along the top.

Introduction and Movement

- The Snapping Turtle is native to the middle and eastern portions of the United States, as well as portions of Central and South America.
- The primary means of introduction in the United States is via the exotic pet trade.
- They were introduced intentionally for aquaculture purposes in British Columbia, Canada.

Prevention Strategy

- Thoroughly research any animal you would like to own, and ensure you are aware of your local laws and regulations.
- To prevent accidental introductions, ensure that all watercraft, wading gear, and other water related equipment are clean, drained, and dry between use in each waterbody.
- Never release any animal or plant into the wild.
- Can escape from pet trade facilities, enclosures, or water gardens.
- Always Remember: **DON'T LET IT LOOSE**

CLEAN & DRAIN & DRY

Sources

- USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species: nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?speciesID=1225
- The Common Snapping Turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*: depts.washington.edu/oldenlab/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Chelydra_serpentina_Nakama_2014.pdf

