Turtles appeared on the Earth some 230 million years ago. They lived during the age of the dinosaurs, before there were mammals, birds, lizards, snakes or crocodiles, and continue to thrive today. Turtles are unique among vertebrates because they possess a shell into which they can withdraw their head, neck, limbs and tail. This ability greatly reduces their exposure to predators.

Two hundred sixty species of turtles occur worldwide. Seventeen of these species inhabit Illinois, dwelling in forests, prairies, marshes, swamps, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. Those aquatic species that bask are regularly seen on sunny days lining logs and sand banks. Other species are most often encountered in the spring while crossing highways and fields in search of new habitats, mates or nesting sites. The chief conservation issue for turtles is the loss or alteration of critical habitats. Over-exploitation of turtles for food and the pet trade are also serious problems in Illinois.

This poster was made possible by:
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Education
Division of Natural Heritage
Illinois Department of Transportation

Species List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chelydra serpentina</td>
<td>Snapping Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macrochelys temminckii</td>
<td>Alligator Snapping Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chrysemys picta</td>
<td>Painted Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clemmys guttata</td>
<td>Spotted Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emydoidea blandingii</td>
<td>Blanding's Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graptemys geographica</td>
<td>Common Map Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graptemys ouachitensis</td>
<td>Ouachita Map Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graptemys pseudogeographica</td>
<td>False Map Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudemys concinna</td>
<td>River Cooter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrapene carolina</td>
<td>Eastern Box Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrapene ornata</td>
<td>Ornate Box Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trachemys scripta</td>
<td>Slider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinosternon flavescens spooneri</td>
<td>Illinois Mud Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinosternon subrubrum</td>
<td>Eastern Mud Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sternotherus odoratus</td>
<td>Common Musk Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apalone mutica</td>
<td>Smooth Softshell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apalone spinifera</td>
<td>Spiny Softshell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glossary terms defined on reverse.
**Classification & Diet**

Turtles are members of the Phylum Chordata, Class Reptilia and Order Testudines. Their small drill is a spiral (Figure 1). Look at its beautiful shell, bone, which is covered on both sides by the turtle. This unique shell is made up of bony pieces called scutes. The carapace is the upper part of the shell, and the plastron is the lower part. The shells are composed of keratin, an insoluble protein. The hinge between the shell and the turtle's back is held by a hinge plate, which is a bone of the turtle's backbone.

In Illinois, as in many other states, a drop in water levels due to channelization can affect turtle populations. Channelization is the straightening and/or deepening of a river channel (Figure 2). A snapping turtle with its long, bumpy neck, mud-colored body and large head can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle's diet may include large amounts of plants and invertebrates, such as aquatic insects. Map turtles feed on snails, invertebrates, and small fish. Adult sliders mainly eat plants. River cooters are often found in fields, roadsides, and along concrete embankments. They feed on aquatic insects. Most Illinois turtles are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on a mixed diet of animals and plants. The highly adaptable snapping turtle is the only species in Illinois that can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle with its long, bumpy neck, mud-colored body and large head can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle's diet may include large amounts of plants and invertebrates, such as aquatic insects. Map turtles feed on snails, invertebrates, and small fish. Adult sliders mainly eat plants. River cooters are often found in fields, roadsides, and along concrete embankments. They feed on aquatic insects. Most Illinois turtles are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on a mixed diet of animals and plants. The highly adaptable snapping turtle is the only species in Illinois that can strike out at prey from a distance.

**Conservation**

In Illinois the last turtle and a half, human have cut down many of the large trees that create serene areas for nesting. The Division of Fisheries and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) recommends to reduce or avoid adverse impacts to turtle habitat and populations. The Division recommends that you: 1) avoid roads, 2) keep your pets leashed, 3) keep your dogs leashed, 4) keep pets leashed, 5) keep pets leashed, and 6) avoid roads. The Division recommends that you: 1) avoid roads, 2) keep your pets leashed, 3) keep your dogs leashed, 4) keep pets leashed, 5) keep pets leashed, and 6) avoid roads.

**Turtle Facts**

The setting aside and maintenance of ample clean, concinna alteration of the original habitat has had a major impact on the state's wildlife and plants. In 2008, of the 14 species of turtles found in Illinois, 12 were known to be at risk due to habitat loss. The division recommends that you: 1) avoid roads, 2) keep your pets leashed, 3) keep your dogs leashed, 4) keep pets leashed, 5) keep pets leashed, and 6) avoid roads.

**Illinois**

**Glossary**

animal: a non-human organism that can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle with its long, bumpy neck, mud-colored body and large head can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle's diet may include large amounts of plants and invertebrates, such as aquatic insects. Map turtles feed on snails, invertebrates, and small fish. Adult sliders mainly eat plants. River cooters are often found in fields, roadsides, and along concrete embankments. They feed on aquatic insects. Most Illinois turtles are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on a mixed diet of animals and plants. The highly adaptable snapping turtle is the only species in Illinois that can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle with its long, bumpy neck, mud-colored body and large head can strike out at prey from a distance. A snapping turtle's diet may include large amounts of plants and invertebrates, such as aquatic insects. Map turtles feed on snails, invertebrates, and small fish. Adult sliders mainly eat plants. River cooters are often found in fields, roadsides, and along concrete embankments. They feed on aquatic insects. Most Illinois turtles are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on a mixed diet of animals and plants. The highly adaptable snapping turtle is the only species in Illinois that can strike out at prey from a distance.

**Bibliography**


**Agency Resources**

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Division of Endangered and Threatened Species

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Office of Endangered and Threatened Species

Illinois Natural History Survey

Illinois State Museum

**Illustrations**

Figure 1: Outside of carapace with scutes

Figure 2: Outside of carapace with scutes

Figure 3: Outside of carapace with scutes

Turtle Facts

Trachemys scripta and many other species are active during the spring and fall. The courtship of sliders (Trachemys scripta) is a display that may vary from species to species. One way to help ensure the survival of future turtles is to be aware of their habitat needs and to support efforts to protect turtles. The division recommends that you: 1) avoid roads, 2) keep your pets leashed, 3) keep your dogs leashed, 4) keep pets leashed, 5) keep pets leashed, and 6) avoid roads.

Turtles belong to the phylum Chordata, class Reptilia, order Testudines. The division recommends that you: 1) avoid roads, 2) keep your pets leashed, 3) keep your dogs leashed, 4) keep pets leashed, 5) keep pets leashed, and 6) avoid roads.