

LaRC Species Highlight: Common Snapping Turtle

COMMON NAME: Common Snapping Turtle
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chelydra serpentina*
TYPE: Reptile
DIET: Omnivore
SIZE: 8 to 19 inches
WEIGHT: 8 to 36 pounds



FUN FACTS

Appearance and Attributes

- ✓ These snapping turtles are the most common snapping turtle found in North America.
- ✓ They have a smooth shell, elastic neck, beak like mouth, and a unique thick spikey tail.
- ✓ Can stay underwater for up to 50 minutes before resurfacing for air.
- ✓ They have a bite force of ~ 145 pounds.

Life History and Diet

- ✓ Mating season occurs during the spring and 20-40 eggs are laid two months later with an incubation period from 100 to 140 days.
- ✓ Common snapping turtles are omnivores and will eat fish, frogs, insects, worms, snakes, birds, small mammals, and some vegetation.
- ✓ Average snapping turtle life span in the wild is 18 years but can live up to 30 years.



● Distribution

Map of habitat range in North America.



They lack teeth and use their beak like mouth to tear apart prey.

Often mistaken for an Alligator snapping turtle.



Common snapping turtles spend most of their time underwater except when basking in the sun or females come to land to lay eggs. Once fully grown snapping turtles have no natural predators other than humans. As with any wild animal, if you see a snapping turtle near your facility do not disturb it or try to feed it. **These turtles are highly combative when on land.** If a snapping turtle at LaRC appears to be injured or needs to be relocated, please call the LaRC Environmental Office (Peter Van Dyke) at 864-7517.

SPECIES STATUS:



Least Concern

environmental.larc.nasa.gov

Data obtained from the National Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy, and the National Geographic