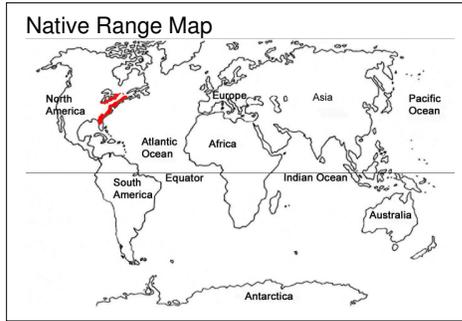


Native Range Map



Spotted Turtle

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Testudines
Family: Emydidae
Genus: *Clemmys*
Species: *guttata*



Photo courtesy of Katherine Wossner

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Spotted turtles range from southern Maine and extreme southern Ontario west to Illinois and south to northern Florida in the east. Isolated colonies can be found in southern Quebec, central Georgia and north central Florida. They require clean, shallow, slow moving bodies of water with muddy or mucky bottoms. They reside in marshy meadows, wet woodlands, boggy areas and beaver ponds.
- **Exhibit Location:** USS Antiquities

Characteristics

- The adult *Clemmys guttata* has a carapace (top shell) length ranging from 3.5 to 5.4 inches.
- The spotted turtle is identified by the round yellow spots on its broad, smooth, black or brownish black carapace. Spots may be faded in older individuals. The plastron (bottom shell) is hingeless and is usually yellow or orange with a black blotch along the outer margin of each scute (shell plate) or scale. Their heads are black and typically have at least a few spots on top and one or more irregular yellow or orange blotches on the sides near the eardrum.
- The sexes are dimorphic (distinctly different in appearance). Males have a more elongated and compressed carapace, and a concave (curved inward) plastron. The male's eyes are typically brown, and the chin is tan, brown, or black. The tail is comparatively longer and thicker, with the vent (anal opening) beyond the edge of the carapace with tail extended. The female's eyes are usually orange and her chin is yellow or orange. The female's tail is comparatively narrow, and when extended, the vent is at or beneath the edge of the carapace. Females are usually slightly larger than males and broader, with a higher carapace and flat or convex (curved outward) plastron.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 25-30 years; **In Captivity** 25-30 years, maximum of 50 yrs

Behaviors

- Spotted turtles are active all day long in early spring and can be found basking on logs, muskrat houses, and grass or grassy knolls. At night, they burrow into muddy bottoms of the wetland or crawl into mammal burrows or under vegetation. Only nesting females are active in the evening.
- In the summer, they are active in early morning and are dormant the rest of the day. In winter, starting in mid-October, they hibernate in shallow water in mud or in muskrat burrows. They have been found in hibernation in congregations of up to 12 individuals.
- They are omnivorous (eat both animal and plant foods), feeding primarily underwater.
- When surprised by predators while basking, they will dive into the water and bury themselves in the mud.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** none

Reproduction

- *Clemmys guttata* reach sexual maturity at about 7-10 years of age. Mating occurs from March to May and usually takes place in the water.
- In late May to early June, at the end of the mating season, females leave the breeding pools in search of nesting areas. They may wander a good distance and, unfortunately, many are killed crossing roads.
- An open site, such as a meadow, field, or the edge of the road is most often chosen for nesting.
- The female uses her hind legs and feet to dig a hole that is about 2 to 2.5 inches deep and 2 inches wide. She then lays 3-6 oval shaped eggs that have thin, flexible shells. She then covers the eggs, as most

turtles do, but goes one step further in disguising the nest: she smoothes the dirt by dragging her body over the ground.

- In about 11 weeks, 1-inch hatchlings emerge and head for wet, grassy areas in search of food and shelter. The sex of the hatchling is determined by nest temperature at specific times during the incubation period. Cooler temperatures produce males and warmer temperatures produce females.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** Ranges from aquatic vegetation to larval amphibians, slugs, snails, crayfish, insects, spiders, worms and carrion
- **At the Zoo:** aquatic carnivore diet (meat, fish, gelatin mix), pinkie mice, crickets, fruit

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** Vulnerable **CITES Appendix:** Not listed
- Loss of habitat has been largely responsible for the major decline of the spotted turtle. This turtle is very sensitive to pollution and toxicants and disappears rapidly with declining water quality.
- Spotted turtles are highly valued by reptile hobbyists because of their small size and bright coloration. Collectors have severely reduced or eliminated populations throughout the species' range.
- Most states do offer this species some degree of legal protection from exploitation, but protection is not yet consistent or universal over the turtles' range.
- Predators: bald eagles, raccoons, skunks, muskrats, humans

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Spotted turtle hatchlings have one spot on each section of the carapace, while older individuals are well sprinkled with 100 or more spots.

Sources:

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