



Eastern Box Turtle

Natural History

Common Name: Eastern Box Turtle, Common Box Turtle

Scientific Name: *Terrapene Carolina*

Lifespan

- Roughly 50 years, some sources list over 100 years

Size

- 5 - 7" in carapace length

Distribution

- North America south of the Great Lakes and east of the Rocky Mountains, from southern Ontario, Canada, south to the Florida Keys and Texas, as well as Northeastern Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula, not native to Minnesota, Iowa, or Wisconsin*

Habitat

- Wide variety of habitats including open broadleaf forests, field-forest edges, shrubby grasslands, marshy meadows, stream valleys, palmetto thickets and other vegetation types.

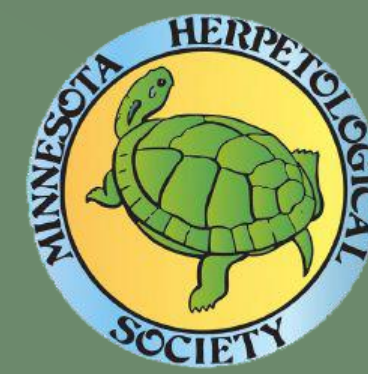
Habits

- Primarily diurnal
- Bathes in shallow water or puddles
- Able to completely close or "box up" into their shells for protection – special hinge on the plastron

Diet

- Omnivorous – will eat anything they can catch. A very wide variety of insects, earthworms, slugs, snails, caterpillars, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion, grasses, berries, mushrooms (including some that are poisonous to humans), flowers, duckweed





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Captive Care

Housing

- A 20 gallon long aquarium or equivalent is the minimum enclosure size, 40 gallon breeder
- Adults may be kept in large pens either inside or preferably outside during summer months
- Substrate should be grasses or grass based hay such as timothy, Bermuda, orchard hays, alfalfa, etc., orchid bark, peat moss, ceramic tiles, slate, cypress mulch. *Avoid cedar and pine shavings, gravel, dirt, or substrates that will mold etc. when wet*
- Outdoor pens must be reinforced to prevent burrowing out
- Access to a water bowl in the cage or pen
- Humid hide with moist sphagnum or damp paper towels, especially for hatchlings or juveniles

Temperature and Lighting

- Ambient cage temperatures in 70's F, with "hot area" of 90 F. Provide heat gradient
- "Hot area" can be achieved by using radiant heat, heat pad on outside of cage, or both
- Lighting can be dome lamp with incandescent bulbs for heat as well - 12 hr cycle
- UVB lighting necessary, especially for hatchlings and juveniles, must be unfiltered, bulb within 6 -12" of tortoise, bulb changed every 4 – 6 months even if light still works
- Thermometer (temp gun or probe) to measure actual temperature is a necessity
- Adjustable temperature heat pads, thermostat and/or rheostat for any heat source is beneficial

Diet

- Omnivorous – can and should be offered a very wide variety of foods
- Earthworms, roaches, crickets, wax worms, butter worms, hornworms, mealworms, superworms, etc. Net swept insects from pesticide-free areas good (grasshoppers, etc.)
- Dark leafy greens romaine, collared, mustard, dandelion, escarole, endive, alfalfa, squash, bell peppers, prickly pear cactus, pumpkin, flowers
- Pelleted diets, should not be staple, read ingredients
- Avoid vegetables high in oxalates (spinach, broccoli, carrots, etc.) and canned cat or dog foods
- Fruits can be offered in small quantities only
- Supplemental vitamins/minerals necessary (calcium/phosphorus ratio), especially for juveniles

Special Notes

- *Ornate box turtles are a different species with their own fact sheet
- Most issues from being kept too cold and not moist or humid enough, respiratory infections
- Metabolic Bone Disease, shell pyramiding or disfigurement (too much protein), dry skin, consuming bright colored inedible objects, good at digging and escaping
- Can be kept together if enough space, but watch closely for aggression

