

Did you know...?

Amazing Animals at MDM: Turtle Facts

Turtles are amazing creatures that live all or most of their time in the water. We have two here at MDM, a rare spotted turtle and a painted turtle. Check them out in Turtle Alley and open the drawers beneath their habitats to see shells of other kinds of turtles.

General Turtle Facts

- A turtle can't completely close off its shell to cover head, and arms, legs.
- Although they are slow on land, turtles are fast in the water and can quickly get away from predators.
- Their colors and sedentary lifestyle help turtles stay out of sight of predators.
- Adult snapping turtles in Maine don't have to fear any predators. Be careful of their sharp beak-like jaws!
- Turtles' nostrils are on the very tip of their snout, allowing them to stay submerged and use their nose like a snorkel.
- Different types of turtles have different types of shell patterns, but each is as individual as a fingerprint.
- Turtles live a long time, some as long as a human or longer!
- Many turtles are endangered and shouldn't be removed from the wild. In some cases it is against the law to take a turtle from the wild.

While turtles have successfully survived for 200 million years, they might not survive living together with us humans. Unfortunately, their shells don't protect them from cars. Watch out for turtles crossing the road, especially in the spring when females are moving around their nesting area. If you do see one crossing the road and can safely help them to the side, always move them in the direction they were going by lifting them by their shell or with a shovel (never touch a snapping turtle), not by their tail.

Turtles as Pets

- Never take turtles from the wild as pets. Turtles sold in pet stores often have been taken from the wild, in some cases illegally.
- Turtles need a lot of care, special food and lighting. They also need regular vet visits to make sure they stay healthy in captivity.
- Never release a captive turtle into the wild. It lacks skills to find food and avoid predators and won't survive.
- If you would like to adopt a turtle, consider one that someone else no longer wants. Animal rescue organizations are often looking for great turtle homes. In fact, the turtles (and all the animals) here at MDM are rescue animals!



Did you know...?

Amazing Animals at MDM: Turtle Facts

Here at MDM we have two rescued turtles, a spotted turtle and a painted turtle. Come check them out in Turtle Alley!

Spotted Turtle (*Clemmys guttata*)

- Our spotted turtle is the ONLY CAPTIVE spotted turtle in Maine!
 - Threatened in Maine (it's illegal to take them, have them or even touch them)
 - If you see one in the wild report it to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
 - Is very small and shy (grows only to about 4 inches)
 - Came from a rescue in Rochester. The parents were found wandering around a parking lot, taken to the Seneca Zoo, had a clutch and we got one of the babies.
 - They use different habitats during different parts of the year:
 - Winter is spent hibernating in marshes and swamps, often in abandoned muskrat lodges.
 - In early spring they move into vernal pools and small ponds.
 - During the hottest summer months they spend their time sleeping under leaves in moist forests.
- They need all of those habitats in close proximity and are therefore extremely sensitive to habitat loss.

Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta picta*)

- This turtle came to MDM as a rescue animal. Remember not to take wild turtles as pets!
- We don't know whether it's a boy or a girl.
- Can grow up to nine inches
- Can be found in all types of Maine's wetlands but prefer lots of plants and logs for basking.
- They bask in large groups to warm up and get rid of parasites (leeches). When any one of the group senses danger they will quickly dive in the water.
- Females dig nests from May to June. Baby turtles will hatch and dig their way out in about 10 weeks. The adults do not parent the nest or the hatchlings.
- Warm seasons produce more female hatchlings and cold seasons produce more male hatchlings.
- Eat water plants but also earthworms, insects, leeches, snails, crayfish, tadpoles, frogs, fish and dead animals.
- Are eaten by heron, raccoon, larger turtles, crows, larger fish, water snakes, hawks, bullfrogs, foxes, skunk and coyotes.

