



Alligator Snapping Turtle

Macrochelys temminckii

Description: This prehistoric looking turtle is often referred to as the dinosaur of turtles. With its spiky shell, tail, and sharp beak, it's easy to see why. The females can weigh up to 50 pounds and the males weigh on average 175 pounds, and have been known to reach up to 220. This is North America's largest fresh water turtle.



Habitat: They dwell in swamps, rivers, canals and lakes nearly most of their lives. Females come out of the water onto the banks to lay eggs once a year.

Range: They are native to the southeastern United States.



Life Span: They can live 50 to 100 years.

Natural Diet: They are a carnivorous turtle and have a very unique hunting technique. They will wait hidden in the water and open their mouth and wiggle their tongue which acts as a lure. When unsuspecting fish come near to eat what they think is a worm, the turtle clamps its incredibly strong beak down, trapping its prey.

Zoo Diet: At the zoo the alligator snapping turtle is fed fish.

Behavior: They are known to be an aggressive turtle. They are ambush predators that will lay and wait for food. They can stay under water for up to 50 minutes before needing to emerge for air.

Reproduction: Once a year, females will venture about 150 feet onto a bank and lay their clutch of eggs, then head back to the water. When the young turtles hatch they will have to find their way down to water on their own.