

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

SNAPPING TURTLE

(*Chelydra serpentina*)

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

DESCRIPTION

Snapping turtles...

- Are large turtles, with adults having 30-50 cm long shells and weighing 4.5 to 18 kg.
- Have black, olive or brown shells that are sometimes covered in algae and have serrated edges at the back.
- Tails are long (they can grow as long as the upper shell) and have a row of dinosaur-like crests.
- Have large, strong legs with webbed feet and long claws.



Photo Credit: BloodIce, Wikimedia Commons

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

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www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

PRIMARY THREAT:

*If established in B.C., snapping turtles could impact native species, including Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) and other aquatic species, through predation and competition.*

SPREAD

Snapping Turtles found outside of their native range have most likely been translocated through the pet trade. Snapping Turtles are long-lived, on average they live 25-40 years but can reach up to 70 years of age! Females reach sexual maturity around 15-20 years. Only single Snapping Turtles have been detected in B.C. and, consequently, there are no known cases of reproduction within the province.

Snapping turtles are highly aquatic and prefer shallow (less than 2 m deep), slow-moving water with a muddy bottom and lots of aquatic vegetation. Within their native range they can be found in various types of wetlands, lakes, and the edges of slow-moving streams. They rarely bask outside of the water and can often be seen walking, rather than swimming, in shallow waters.

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



Photo credit: KMelville, iNaturalist



SNAPPING TURTLE (*Chelydra serpentina*)

DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Snapping Turtles are native to the eastern and central portions of the U.S. Their range in Canada stretches from southern Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia. This species has been reported in B.C., with reports coming from Vancouver Island in the Port Alberni, Tofino, and Duncan areas.

LOOK-ALIKES:

The long, spiked tail and ridges on the back of the shell allow the Snapping Turtle to be easily distinguished from the other turtles in B.C., including the native Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) and non-native Red-eared Slider Turtle (*Trachemys scripta*). Both of these turtles have various red or yellow markings on their head, limbs, and shell whereas Snapping Turtles are a solid greenish to brownish black colour.

Red-eared Slider



Western Painted Turtle



Photo credit: John White (left), Kip Ledage (right)

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Do not release Snapping Turtles in B.C.
- When you purchase a turtle as a pet, consider how you are going to care for it long term.
- Raise awareness to avoid spread into B.C. waters.

DID YOU KNOW?

Snapping turtles are named after their tendency to snap at anything posing them a threat, particularly when on land. Unlike other turtles, their shell is relatively small, and they cannot retreat completely inside of it for protection. This snapping behaviour is their defense tactic.



Photo Credit: USFWSmidwest, Wikimedia Commons

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