

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## SOFTSHELL TURTLES

(family *Trionychidae*)

### HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

#### DESCRIPTION

Softshell turtles...

- Are distinct for their flattened body shape.
- Lack scales on their carapace (top side of shell), which is leathery and pliable.
- Have a layer of solid bone beneath centre of carapace, but absent at edges.
- Family name '*Trionychidae*' reflects their three-clawed, webbed feet.
- Have soft, snorkel-like nostrils.
- Have long necks in comparison to body size.
- Have extremely strong jaw strength.



Florida softshell turtle (*Apalone ferox*) UGA21530

Photo Credit: Ricky Layson Photography, Bugwood.org

### REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

Download the App!



[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

#### PRIMARY THREAT:

*If established in B.C., softshell turtles could impact native species through predation and competition for food and habitat space.*

#### SPREAD

Softshell turtles have spread from their native range through their use as a food item and in traditional medicine, and through the pet trade. Individuals purchased as pets have been released into the wild when pet owners decide they can no longer care for them. Softshell turtles are fast swimmers due to their shape, relatively lightweight shells, and strongly webbed feet. This characteristic, along with their wide-ranging diet could allow them to spread quickly and establish in a variety of habitats within B.C.

Habitat preference of softshell turtles varies with species. In general, they can be found in a variety of waterbody types, from ponds and lakes to fast-flowing rivers. They can be seen basking on logs or on sand.

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



Spiny softshell turtle (*Apalone spinifera*) 540630

Photo credit: Karan A. Rawlins, Bugwood.ca



# SOFTSHELL TURTLES (family *Trionychidae*)

Spiny softshell turtle (*Apalone spinifera*)



Photo Credit: Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

## DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Softshell turtle species are native to numerous regions around the world, including North America. In 2011, a Spiny Softshell Turtle (*Apalone spinifera*) was reported in Stanley Park, which was most likely an abandoned pet. There have been no other reports of softshell turtles in B.C.



Photo Credit: Jim Davis, University of Florida blogs

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## LOOK-ALIKES:

While softshell turtles have unique characteristics, it's possible that they may be confused with turtles in B.C. including the native Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) and non-native Red-eared Slider Turtle (*Trachemys scripta*).

Softshell Turtles are unique due to their **flat body shape; leathery, soft shell; long neck; and pointed, snorkel-like snout.**

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Do not release softshell 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?

Softshell turtles are eaten as a delicacy in most parts of their range, particularly in East Asia.

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Florida softshell turtle (*Apalone ferox*)



Photo Credit: Johnskate17, Wikimedia Commons