

Reptiles of Connecticut



Announcements

- If you haven't already, please respond to the night trip Doodle poll
- Clarification: Even if you're partnering up for your project, you'll still need to submit two independent and original project proposals on Friday
- Fenton today; I am willing to sacrifice being dry for turtles... ARE YOU?



What kind of herp is this?



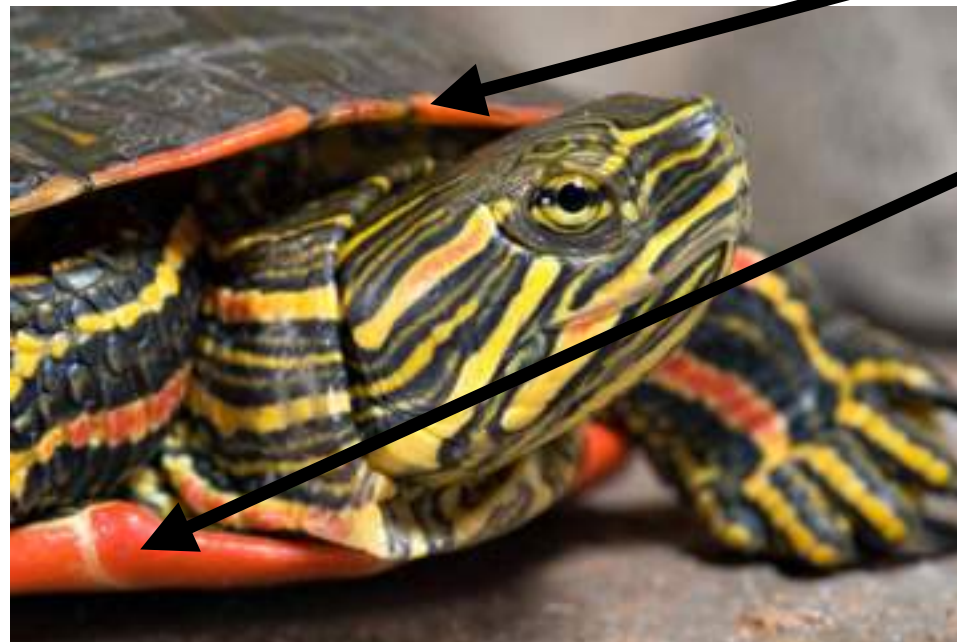
What kind of herp is this?

Reptiles

- “Non-avian reptiles”
 - Turtles
 - Lizards
 - Snakes
 - Crocodiles
- Hard scales
- All breathe air



Turtles



- **Testudinia**
- Closely related to alligators and birds
- Distinguishing characteristics
 - Hard shell
 - Top of shell: Carapace
 - Bottom: Plastron
 - No teeth (hard beak)
- 300 species worldwide
- **8 species** in CT (not including marine visitors)

Snapping Turtle

- ***Chelydra serpentina***
- Largest freshwater turtle in CT
 - Permanent, large bodies of water
- Mates in early summer
 - Nests are in sandy river embankments
- >100 pounds as an adult in captivity
- Ambush predator



Eastern Painted Turtle



- *Chrysemys picta*
- Most common turtle in CT
- Nests made in sandy soils in early summer
- Often seen basking on rocks in large ponds

Wood Turtle



- *Clemmys (Glyptemys) insculpta*
- **DEEP Status: SPECIAL CONCERN**
- “The White Whale of the Fenton”
- Bright orange legs
- Flattened shell, dull carapace with bright plastron
- Prefers rivers and large stream
 - With sandy bottoms
 - With surrounding riparian habitat

Bog Turtle

- *Clemmys (Glyptemys) muhlenbergii*
- **DEEP Status: ENDANGERED**
- Similar in appearance to the wood turtle
 - Has large orange spot on the neck
 - Shell has a higher dome
 - Much smaller
- Rarely seen due to habitat disturbance
 - Protected as a threatened species throughout the US
 - Only found in select western CT towns in limestone valleys



Spotted Turtle

- *Clemmys guttata*
- Dark shell with orange/yellow spots
- At home in marshy meadows, swamps, and ditches
- A common resident of the Fenton field marsh



Eastern Box Turtle

- *Terrapene carolina*
- **DEEP Status: SPECIAL CONCERN**
- Large domed shell
 - Brightly covered carapace
 - Shell can close completely
- Inhabits well-drained woodland areas, sometimes swamp-like areas, but mostly open forests
- More common in CT lowlands, rarer in NE and NW corners



Diamondback Terrapin

- *Malaclemys terrapin*
- More common in estuaries and tidal marshes on the shore west of the CT river outlet
 - Love unpolluted brackish water
- White face with sculpted shell
 - Young have prominent spotted coloration and patterning on the shell



Musk Turtle (Stinkpot)



- *Sternotherus odoratus*
- Small turtle, with a dome shell
- Three stripes along the head
- A bottom crawler in marshes, slow streams, and ponds
 - Typically covered in algae
- Emits a strong musk (duh)
- Much more common in the Housatonic and Thames river drainages, some very limited populations in the north

Lizards

- **Squamata**
- One of the most diverse group of reptiles
- Includes the snakes
- Herbivores, carnivores
- Four limbs or none
- Live bearers and egg-layers
- **1 species** of lizard in CT



Five-lined Skink

- *Eumeces (Plestiodon) fasciatus*
- **DEEP Status: THREATENED**
- Completed terrestrial, mostly found under rocks
- Bright blue tail as juveniles
- Males have a broad, red head, during mating season and turn olive, females retain juvenile stripes but lose tail color
- Found in rocky habitat along the Housatonic river (sometimes spotted by rock climbers in western CT)



Snakes

- **Serpentes**
- No limbs
- All carnivores
- 5000 species worldwide
- **14 species** in CT
- 2 **VENOMOUS**



Eastern Garter Snake



- *Thamnophis sirtalis*
- Most common snake in CT and the US
 - It's hard NOT to find it
- Model snake for most of what we know about snakes
- One dorsal stripe, two lateral stripes, checkerboard pattern in CT, but really variable across the US

Eastern Ribbon Snake

- *Thamnophis sauritis*
- DEEP Status: **SPECIAL CONCERN**
- Closely resembles the garter snake
 - **Long tail** gives it away, can be 1/3 of total body length
- Several rows of colored scaled between lateral stripes and belly scales, no checkering
- More aquatic than the garter snake
 - Found around streams, bogs, swamps, pond edges
 - Feeds on fish and aquatic amphibians



Northern Water Snake

- *Nerodia sipedon*
- If you're around freshwater, you can bet on finding these snakes
- Often confused with cottonmouths and copperheads
 - Large, heavy-bodied
 - Triangular head
 - Keeled scales
- Juveniles have an obvious banding pattern
- Eat fish and frogs



Northern Black Racer

- *Coluber constrictor*
- All black, with a white chin
 - Young are grey with black blotches
- Smooth scales
- Common in meadows and woods, but found in many different habitats



Black Rat Snake

- *Elaphe obsoleta*
- Largest snake in CT
 - More common in southern CT, largely absent from NE corner
- Similar to the black racer, but with important differences:
 - Keeled scales, some color pattern
 - White chin extends down the body
- Eats rodents (duh), birds, and sometimes frogs



Eastern Hognose Snake



- *Heterodon platyrhinos*
- Specializes on toads (large teeth “pop” toads)
- Rear-fanged, large teeth “pops” toads
- Resembles the northern water snake, but its nose gives it away
- Well known for a variety of defensive mechanisms
 - Cobra hooding
 - Plays dead



Nope, I'm dead, nothing to see here

Eastern Milk Snake



- *Lampropeltis triangulum*
- A very common and harmless snake
- Common name comes from frequent sightings in barns
- Young are often bright red
- Probably a coral snake mimic, but adults lack the red color, since there are no native coral snakes in New England

Northern Ringneck Snake

- *Diadophis punctatus*
- Another very common CT snake, found in a variety of habitats
- Small snake (about the size of juveniles of other species)
- Specializes on insects
- When disturbed...
 - Emits a powerful musk
 - Corkscrews its tail to advertise its poisonous skin



Dekay's Brown Snake



- *Storeria dekayi*
- Yet another common and small snake
- Mostly found in stone walls, rock rubble, and under junk
- Brown with regular black dots down the back

Northern Redbelly Snake

- *Storeria occipitomaculata*
- Mostly found in the northern regions in the state
- Prefers hilly habitat
- Can also be found under rock rubble and under junk



Smooth Green Snake



- *Opheodrys (Liochlorophis) vernalis*
- Difficult to find in CT, though supposedly common in eastern CT
- *Field herpetology classes have yet to spot this snake*
- Apparently terrestrial, found in grassy fields and meadows
- Scales are smooth, no keels

Eastern Worm Snake

- ***Carphophis amoenus***
- Smally burrowing snake with reduced eyes and narrow head
- Found in log habitat similar to *Plethodon cinereus*
- Largely limited to the SE corner of CT and other lowland areas



Northern Copperhead

- *Agkistrodon contortix*
- **DEEP Status: DECLINING**
- Limited distribution in CT
 - Talus slopes along the CT river
- Tan, with patterns matching leaf litter
- IR vision
- **VENOMOUS**



Timber Rattlesnake



- *Crotalus horridus*
- **DEEP Status: HIGHLY ENDANGERED**
- Only rattlesnake in CT
- Protected by the state, only one or two populations
 - Dr. Schwenk will get “scientists” calling his office looking for these sites...
- IR Vision
- Feeds entirely on small mammals
- **VENOMOUS**