



# Alligator Snapping Turtle

*Macrochelys suwanniensis*



**The alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys suwanniensis*) is the largest freshwater turtle in the western hemisphere reaching up to 250 lbs! Alligator snapping turtles have a tongue shaped like a worm which they use to lure in prey. They are seldomly seen and spend most of their days deep within holes.**



# Common Characteristics

Of the *Macrochelys suwanniensis*

Suwannee alligator snapping turtles (*Macrochelys suwanniensis*) have an extra row of marginal scutes on the side of their shell (figure 2). Compared to a common snapping turtle, alligator snapping turtles have thicker ridges on their back, a sharper nose, and a wider head (figure 1). The alligator snapping turtle is one of the largest turtles in the world.



Figure 1: Alligator snapping turtle (left) next to common snapping turtle (right)



Figure 2: Extra row of marginal scutes



# Common Snapping Turtle

*Chelydra serpentina*



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**The common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*). Snapping turtles are usually found in dark places waiting to ambush prey but are also commonly seen crossing roads to disperse and lay eggs. They will commonly lay between 20-40 eggs at a time! Snapping turtles can live over 30 years.**



# Common Characteristics

Of the *Chelydra serpentina*

The common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) is a large turtle found throughout the eastern United States. They can grow up to 75 lbs but are most commonly observed around 10 lbs. Compared to alligator snapping turtles, common snapping turtles have a long neck, relatively smooth shell, and a wide head (figure 1 & 2). These turtles are commonly seen crossing roads during the spring to lay eggs. If it is safe for you to exit your car, you can help them cross in the direction they are heading.



Figure 1: Alligator snapping turtle (left) next to common snapping turtle (right)

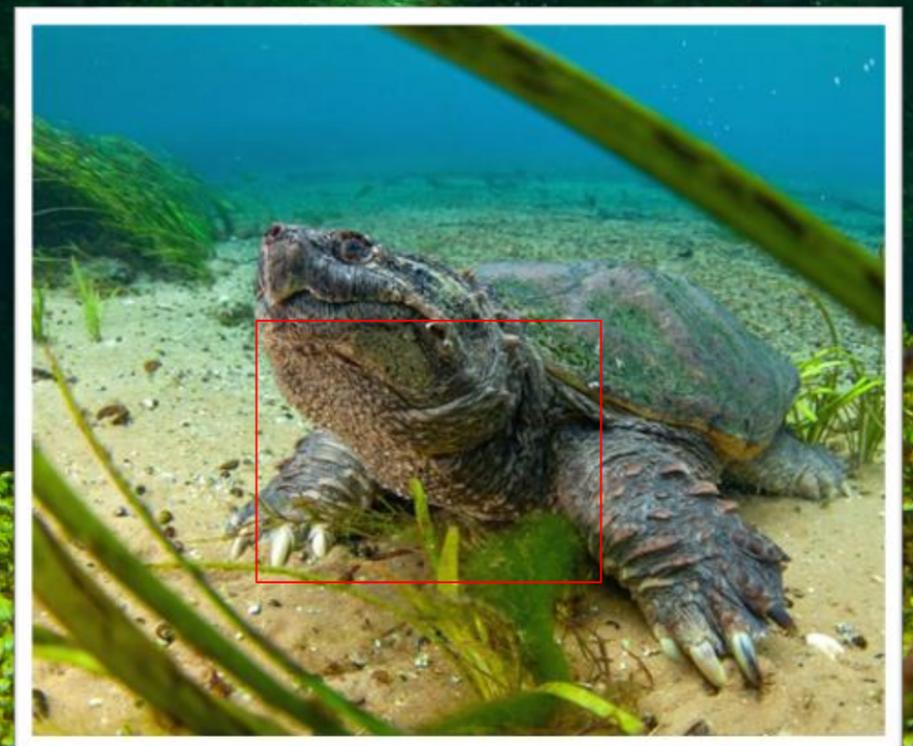


Figure 2: The common snapping turtle has a long neck

# Loggerhead Musk Turtle

*Sternotherus minor*



**The loggerhead musk turtle (*Sternotherus minor*) is a small turtle found throughout the southeastern United States. Loggerhead musk turtles spend most of their time on the bottom searching for snails to eat. This species is so small that it is a common prey item for bass, otters, and birds!**

# Common Characteristics

## Of the *Sternotherus minor*

The loggerhead musk turtle (*Sternotherus minor*) is a small turtle, usually 4-6 inches in length (figure 3). They have very large heads and are usually light brown in color (figure 1). Loggerhead musk turtles are commonly seen on the bottom searching for food (figure 2).

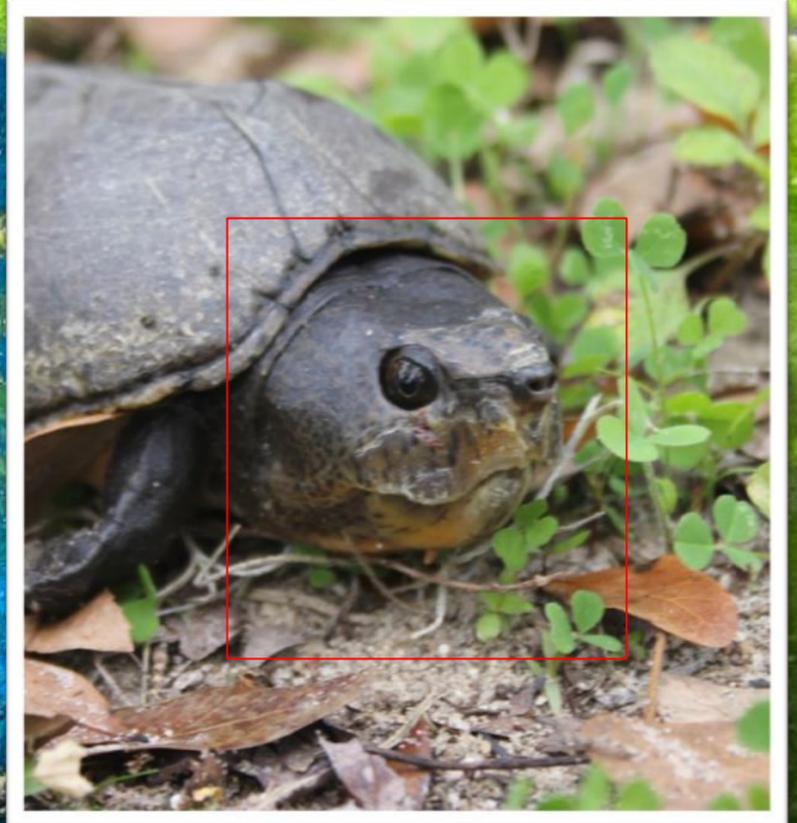


Figure 1: The large head of a loggerhead musk turtle



Figure 2: Loggerhead musk turtle on the bottom of a river

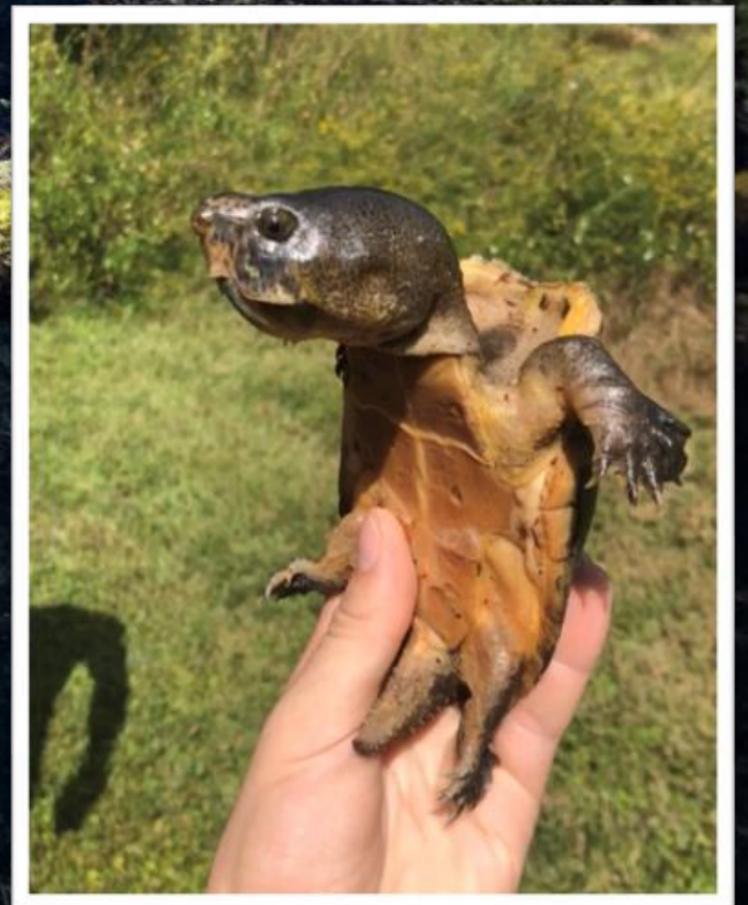


Figure 3: The large head and small stature of *S. minor*



# Eastern Musk Turtle

*Sternotherus odoratus*



The eastern musk turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*) is a small turtle found throughout the southeastern United States. Eastern musk turtles spend most of their time on the bottom and have highly vascularized cloaca's which oxygen can diffuse through (i.e. they can breathe through their butts!).

# Common Characteristics

## Of the *Sternotherus odoratus*

The eastern musk turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*) is a small turtle, usually 3-4 inches in length. They are uniquely characterized by a yellow stripe on their face (figure 1). Compared to loggerhead musk turtles, eastern musk turtles are usually much darker in color (figure 2). This species is nocturnal (most active at night) and can most commonly be seen foraging in shallow waters.

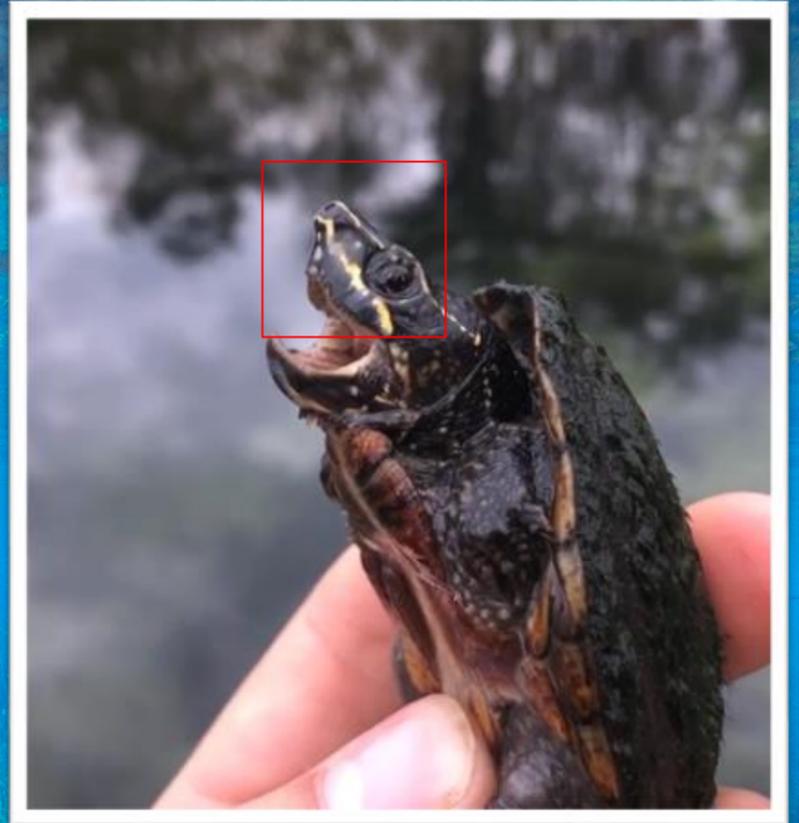


Figure 1: Yellow stripe on face

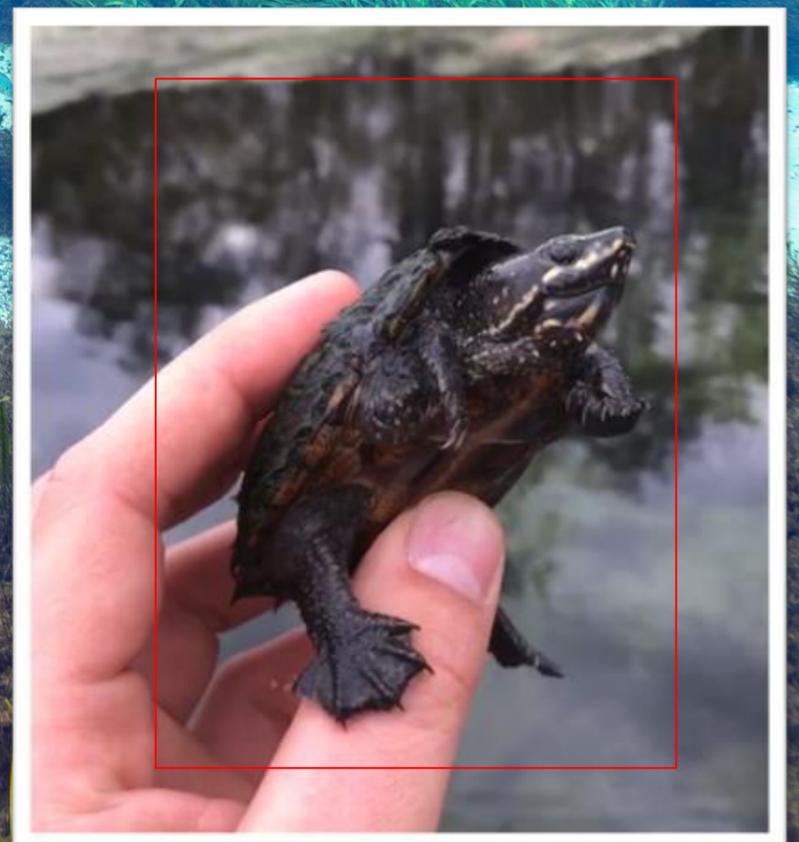


Figure 2: The dark color of eastern musk turtles

# Yellow-Bellied Slider

*Trachemys scripta*



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The yellow-bellied slider (*Trachemys scripta*) is a medium sized turtle found throughout the eastern United States. Yellow-bellied sliders are more commonly found in slow/stagnant bodies of water compared to their close relatives the cooters. Yellow-bellied sliders are also known as pond turtles and slider turtles.

# Common Characteristics

## Of the *Trachemys scripta*

The yellow-bellied slider (*Trachemys scripta*) commonly has a large yellow blotch behind their eyes (figure 1). Compared to cooters, sliders have rough shells (figure 2). They very frequently have two dots at the front of their plastron/belly (figure 3).

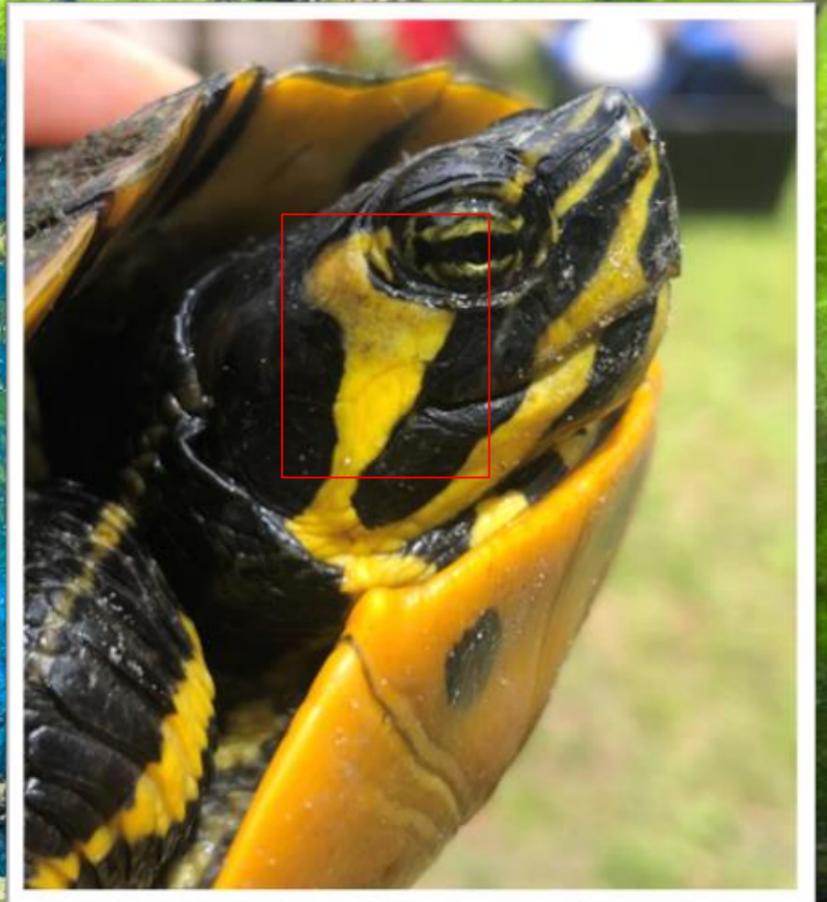


Figure 1: Yellow blotch behind the eye



Figure 2: The rough shell of *T. scripta*

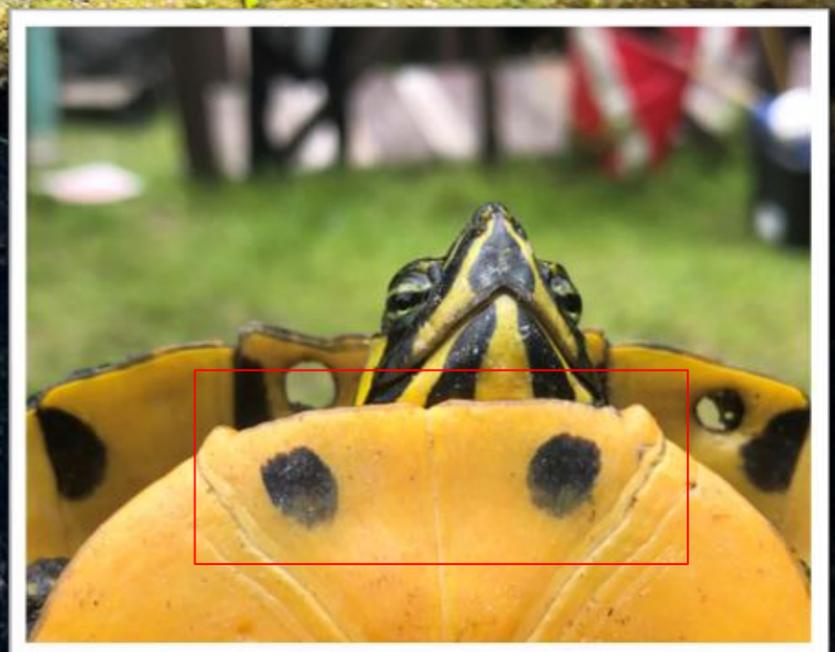


Figure 3: Two dots on the front of the plastron



# River Cooter

*Pseudemys concinna*



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**The river cooter (*Pseudemys concinna*) is a medium sized turtle found throughout Florida rivers and springs. Cooters are often found in swift moving waters. As turtles are unable to regulate their body temperature, they are commonly observed basking on logs to “warm up”.**



# Common Characteristics

## Of the *Pseudemys concinna*

The river cooter (*Pseudemys concinna*) has many names throughout its range. The most common are river cooter, river turtle, and Suwannee cooter. They have shadowing on the front of their plastron/belly in the shape of a "V" (figure 1). Compared to sliders which have a thick blotch, cooters have a thin yellow line behind their eyes.

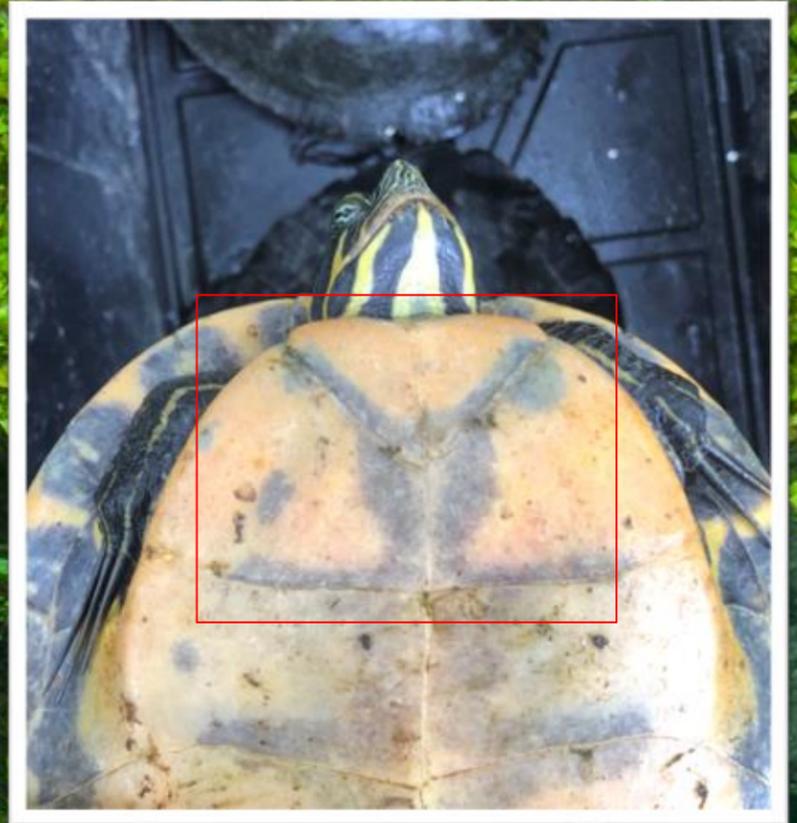


Figure 1: "V" shadowing on plastron/belly

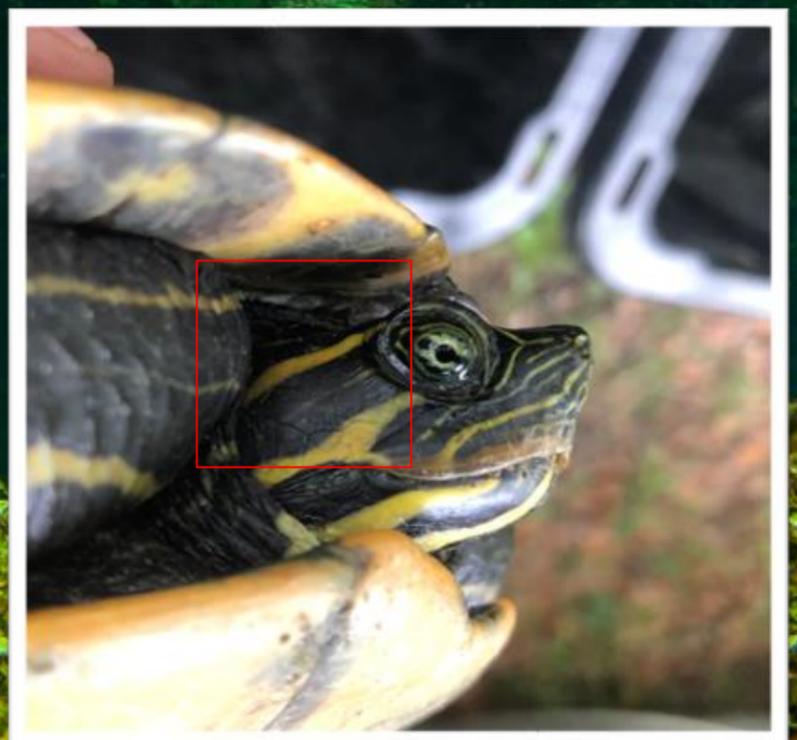


Figure 2: thin yellow line behind eye



# Red Belly Cooter

*Pseudemys nelsoni*



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The red belly cooter (*Pseudemys nelsoni*) is a medium sized turtle found throughout Florida rivers and springs. These turtles are much more uncommon than their close relatives Florida cooters and river cooters but are still frequently seen basking on logs or swimming.



# Common Characteristics

## Of the *Pseudemys nelsoni*

The red belly cooter (*Pseudemys nelsoni*) is a medium sized turtle usually between 10-15 inches long. They have two cusps (teeth) on their beak (figure 1). Red belly cooters commonly have a very distinctive bright red plastron (belly; figure 2) but not always. Like most cooters, the red belly is very frequently seen during the day basking on logs, rocks, and banks. They feed mainly on aquatic plants and invertebrates but will scavenge on dead birds, mammals, and fish.



Figure 1: Two "teeth" on beak

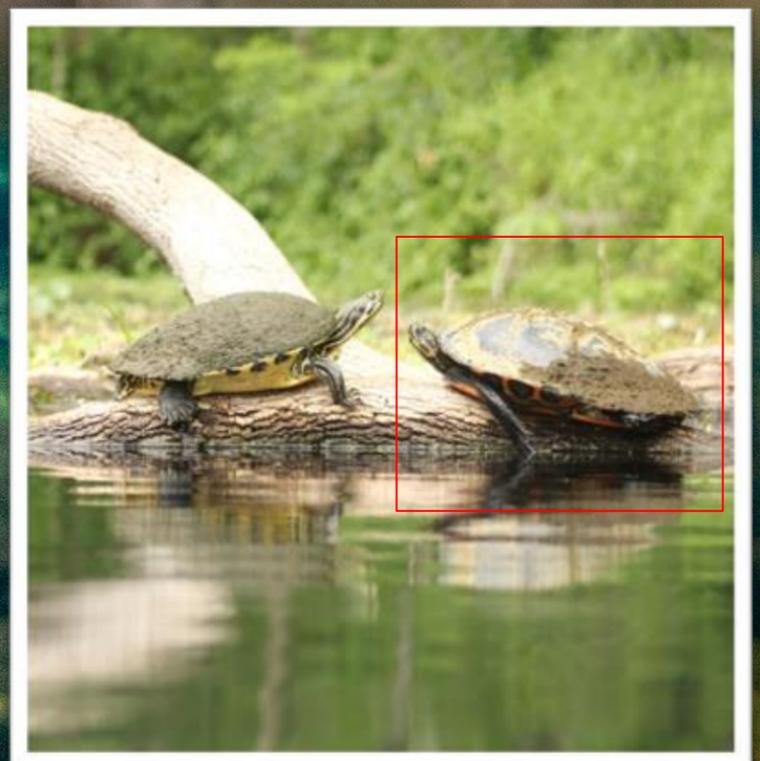


Figure 2: Red belly cooter (right) compared to Florida cooter (left)



# Florida Cooter

*Pseudemys floridana*



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**The Florida cooter (*Pseudemys floridana*) is a large turtle found throughout Florida rivers and springs. These turtles are commonly observed basking on logs - often in groups - and foraging the bottom for aquatic vegetation and invertebrates.**



# Common Characteristics

Of the *Pseudemys floridana*

The Florida cooter (*Pseudemys floridana*) is a medium sized turtle usually between 10-15 inches long. It has an all-yellow plastron/belly (figure 1). This is in contrast to a similar species, the river cooter, which has shading/markings on its plastron/belly. Unlike yellow bellied sliders which have a thick yellow blotch behind their eye, Florida cooters have a thin yellow line (figure 2).



Figure 1: Yellow plastron with no shading/ markings

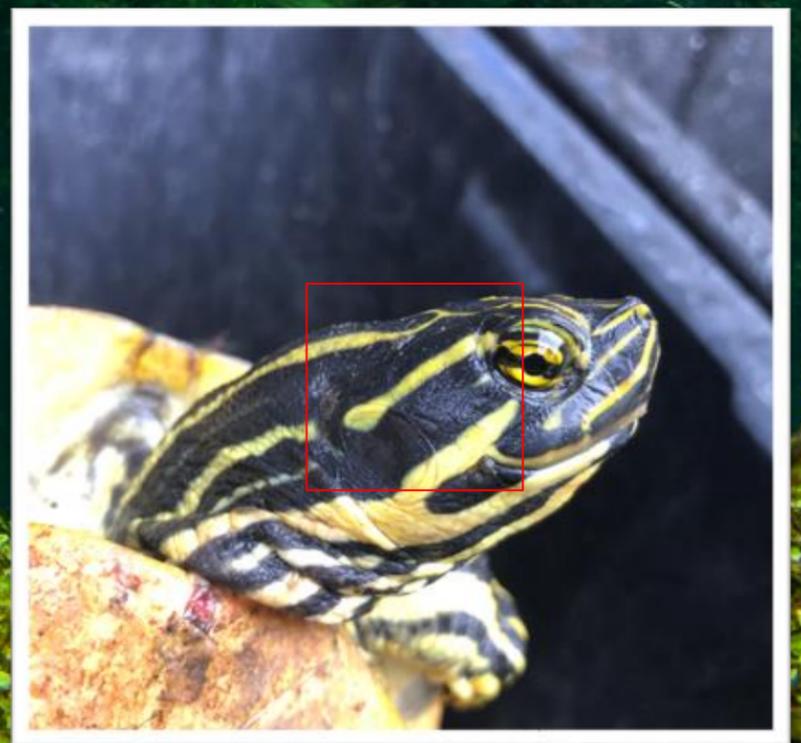


Figure 2: Thin yellow line behind eye



# Florida Softshell

*Apalone ferox*



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**The Florida softshell (*Apalone ferox*) is a large turtle found throughout Florida. The skin covering their shell and large webbed feet allow them to move at tremendous speeds underwater. Pound-for-pound the Florida softshell has a stronger bite force than a snapping turtle!**

# Common Characteristics

## Of the *Apalone ferox*

The Florida softshell turtle (*Apalone ferox*) is a common, large turtle frequently between 10-25 inches in length. They have a very long, thin nose which they will use as a snorkel (figure 1). Perhaps most iconic characteristic of this species is the skin covering their shell and large webbed feet (figure 2). These characteristics allow them to achieve great speeds underwater.

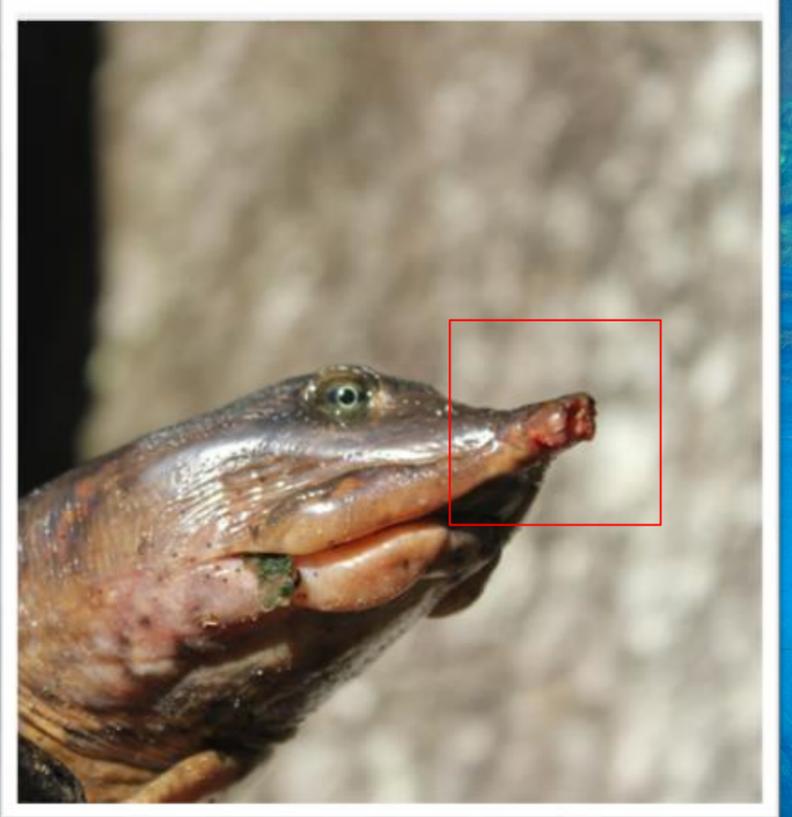


Figure 1: Long nose of a Florida softshell

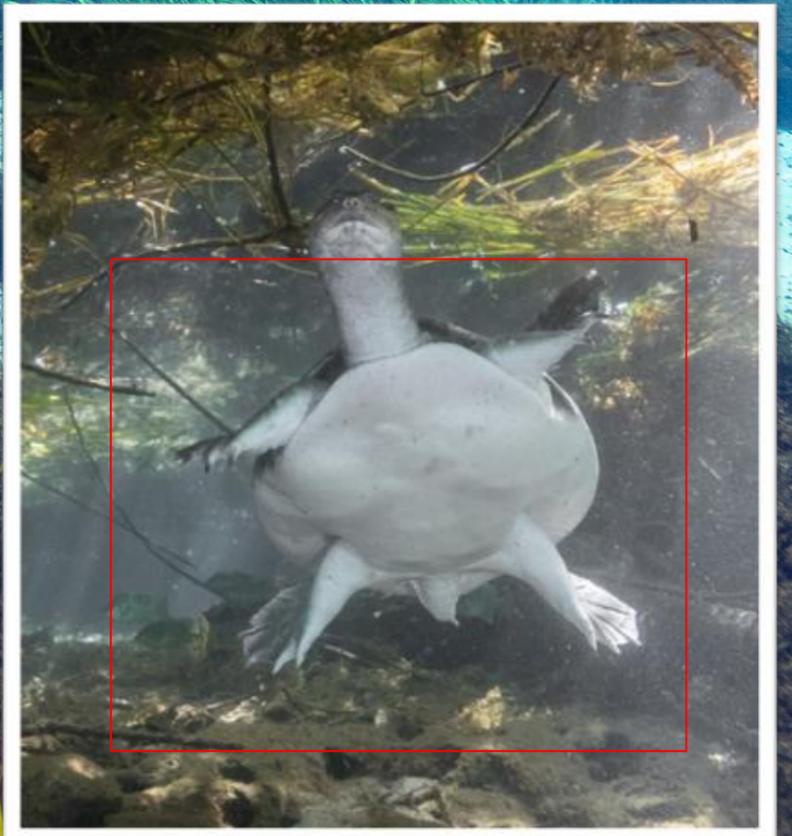


Figure 2: The soft shell and large webbed feet of a Florida softshell turtle