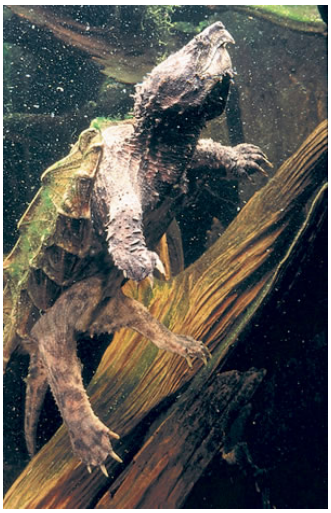
Snapping Turtle

I look like…

A snapping turtle like me can be recognized by my long neck, muscular limbs, long tail, and by the saw-like edges on the back of my shell. Most snapping turtles are colored brown, dark green, grey or black and we have cream or light yellow colored skin on the underside of our bodies. Sadly, we don't have shells that cover our entire bodies. This means that we cannot fully draw ourselves into our shells for protection like many other kinds of turtles can. Also, I have large, powerful webbed feet, making me a great swimmer. On land, however, my webbed feet make it hard for me to get around.

My habitat is…

I prefer almost any body of fresh water like lakes, ponds and slow-moving rivers. I especially like muddy waters and waters that have lots of plant life for me to hunt or hide in. You can find snappers like me from Canada all the way to Mexico and most freshwater lakes, ponds and streams in-between. However, you can find some female snapping turtles on land laying their eggs from late spring to early summer, but watch out! Snapping turtles are very aggressive when on land!



What I eat is…

I prefer to eat dead, but not rotting, fish. I also eat crayfish, toads, frogs, fish, aquatic (water) insects, terrestrial (land) insects, and muskrats. When I hunt I do not chase around my prey. I have a special tongue to help me catch food. On my tongue there is a pink, worm-like organ that wiggles. So all I have to do is sit still, open my mouth and wiggle my tongue. When any of my prey animals get too close to my lure, I can extend my neck almost half of my body length to snap them up! Also you can find me eating aquatic plants like algae and duckweed.

Some interesting facts are…

- In water, snapping turtles are very calm, and rarely attack humans because we can swim away very easily.

- On land, snapping turtles are very aggressive, because we can't hide in our shell for protection and can't move very quickly. So we know our best defense is a good offense!

- Snapping turtles have very powerful jaws and sharp beaks, so we use our powerful bite to hunt and defend ourselves.

- Female snapping turtles can lay from 20-40 eggs in one clutch. A clutch is another term for how many eggs an animal can lay at one time.

- Snapping turtles don't have many predators when fully grown, but many animals that live in lakes and ponds love to eat baby turtles.

- Snapping turtles can weigh up to 45 pounds and live to be 40 years old!