

## Roadside Reptile Attractions

**These giant roadside reptiles are available for your viewing pleasure.**

*By Clay Jackson*

### Giant Roadside Herps

**Murtle the Turtle, world's largest manmade tortoise (Joshua Tree, California).**

Murtle originally started out as a local parade float back in 1957, which was donated to the chamber of commerce and the model for the present-day concrete Murtle that resides along the town's main street. Murtle is about 4 feet tall and 10 feet long.

**Thread Frogs (Willimantic, Connecticut).**

Four giant, whimsical, bronze bullfrogs sit atop four giant spools of thread and anchor each end of the town bridge in this picturesque New England town. Each frog assumes a different pose, is 11 feet tall and weighs 3,000 pounds. The sculptures commemorate the town's textile history and the "Battle of the Frogs" that occurred during the time of the early settlers.

A short history of the bridge by local historian Thomas R. Beardsley appears on a bronze plaque: "The following account of Windham's famous frog fight is condensed from David E. Phillips' *Legendary Connecticut* (1984). In 1754 Windham's Colonel Eliphailer Dyer raised a local regiment to fight in the French and Indian War. Those left behind felt vulnerable to attack. The Windhamites' worst fears seemed realized during a steamy-hot June night, when unearthly screams emanated from the darkness. Valiant villagers grabbed muskets and fired blindly into the night."

The awful truth was revealed at dawn. Several hundred dead and dying bullfrogs were discovered in a dried-up millpond, two miles east of the village center. Windham became forever known as the scene of the 'Battle of the Frogs.'"

**Swampy, the world's largest gator (Christmas, Florida).**

Built in 1992, Swampy is just over 200 feet long. The building houses a gift shop, offices and ticket counter - all part of the Jungle Adventures theme park.

**Testudo (University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland).** See "Testudo" article.

**W'eel Turtle (Dunseith, North Dakota).**

Created by George Gottbreht in 1982 as a way to draw customers to his Dale's convenience store, restaurant and motel, this turtle is constructed of over 2,000 stacked automobile tire rims. Boosters suggest that it is the world's largest man-made turtle, but residents of nearby Bottineau say that their Tommy (see below) is the world's largest. The W'eel Turtle is two stories tall and the head weighs a ton (it can bob up and down too).

**Tommy the Turtle (Bottineau, North Dakota).**

About 18 miles west of the W'eel Turtle is Tommy the Turtle. Dedicated in 1978, Tommy is also touted as the world's largest man-made turtle and, naturally, sits astride the world's largest man-made snowmobile. The 32-foot-tall statue is 35 feet long and more than 12 feet wide. It weighs 3 tons and is made from Fiberglas-covered foam insulation. By the way, there's a nearby mountain range called - you guessed it - the Turtle Mountains.

**World's largest rattlesnake (Freer, Texas).**

The world's largest man-made rattlesnake is more than 7 feet tall and is coiled in front of the Freer Chamber of Commerce.

If you just can't get enough oversized animals, or perhaps you wish to include a visit to the world's largest twine ball, paint can, or giant gold peanut while journeying to see giant herps, check out [www.roadsideamerica.com](http://www.roadsideamerica.com). You could easily base an entire vacation around such roadside gigantism.