

## Snapping Turtles

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Photograph by Dick Bartlett Snapping turtles (of the family Chelydrae) are easily kept. The common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina* ssp.) is the most common snapper species found in the pet trade. A common snapper's shell can exceed 12 inches in length, and the adult weight of this turtle may be 50 pounds or more. It has a brown, knobby carapace, a reduced plastron, a very long neck, formidable jaw power and often a short temper.

Adequate space is important for snapping turtles. One or two small, semiaquatic turtles could properly live in at least a 40 gallon breeder size tank, but more space is always preferable. Cleanliness is essential for the health of turtles. Enclosures should be cleaned frequently. Some species may be kept outside (year-round or during the summer, depending upon the climate). For haulout areas, a few limb sections wedged into place and protruding well above the water in the center of the tank are ideal in most cases.

Warmth – especially in the form of a basking area – is very important. Most snapping turtles enjoy basking temperatures ranging from 84 to 94 degrees Fahrenheit. Water temperatures between 72 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit are fine. Vitamin D and calcium supplements, used in conjunction with full-spectrum lighting, will give turtles a better chance at good health.