

## Soft-Shelled Turtles

**Soft-shelled turtles are a bit problematic with their long necks and their tendency to bite.**

Haulout spots should be smooth so the soft-shelled turtle doesn't damage its plastron on rough surfaces.

Photograph by Dick BartlettSoft-shelled turtles are a bit problematic with their long necks and their tendency to bite. The Florida (Aplone [Trionyx] ferox), the various spiny (A. spinifera ssp.) and the smooth (A. multica) are the soft-shelled turtles most often available to U.S. hobbyists. Soft-shelled turtles are largely aquatic and easy to keep.

Adequate space is important for soft-shelled 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. Haulout spots should be smooth, not rough and coarse, because these turtles will badly damage their plastrons on rough surfaces.

Warmth – especially in the form of a basking area – is very important. Most soft-shelled 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.