

ALLIGATOR SNAPPING TURTLE

(*Macrochelys temminckii*)

NONNATIVE



Description: Largest freshwater turtle in North America (can exceed 26 inches in length). Has a dark-brown or dark-gray, extremely “spiky” carapace, a massive head, and a very long, spiked tail. Also has a strongly hooked and powerful upper jaw capable of inflicting a painful bite.

Habitat: Aquatic; rarely found out of the water. Native to the Mississippi River drainage (Gulf Coast, from Texas to Florida). Has been found in urban ponds and canals in Phoenix and Tucson, but may occur in other urban areas of Arizona.

Behavior: An aggressive predator and a food generalist, these turtles eat plants and most animal matter they can capture, including waterfowl, generally out competing other turtles for resources. Spends winters in mud at the bottom of a lake or pond.

If you find one: If you find a snapping turtle away from a source of water, where it might be harmed or cause harm to others, please contact the [nearest Game and Fish office](#) or the Phoenix Herpetological Society for information and recommendations. Use extreme caution around snapping turtles as they have very powerful jaws and will bite to defend themselves.

*Snapping turtles are Restricted Live Wildlife in Arizona, meaning they cannot be imported, exported, or possessed without a special license or lawful exemption.