

COMMON SNAPPING TURTLE

(*Chelydra serpentina*)

NONNATIVE



Description: Large turtle (up to 19 inches long) with a black to olive-brown, keeled upper carapace often covered by algae and mud, a large head with a powerful hooked upper jaw, and a long spiked tail.

Habitat: Aquatic; rarely found out of the water. Native to the eastern half of the United States as far west as the Rocky Mountains, but has become established in urban ponds and canals in Phoenix and may occur in other urban areas in 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 have a large head and powerful jaws

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