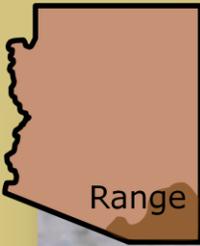


ORNATE BOX TURTLE

(*Terrapene ornata*)



NATIVE/PROTECTED



Photo by Israel Leebach

Description: Small turtle (up to 6 inches long) with a brown, high-domed carapace, often with a yellow line on top running from front to back and yellow stripes radiating from the center of each of the scutes. Older individuals may be completely brown or straw colored. Plastron has one hinge in front, allowing them to close their shells completely. Males have a bluish head, red or orange eyes, a concave plastron, and a long, curving, inner hind claw. Females have brown or yellow eyes and a flat plastron.

Habitat: Terrestrial; in Arizona, they mainly inhabit semi-desert grassland, desert scrub, and evergreen woodlands.

One hinge on the plastron



Behavior: Omnivorous; eats insects, worms, carrion and many kinds of vegetation, including cactus pads. During dry periods, they remain in burrows composed of loose soil. They emerge in the morning and after rain to forage.

Conservation: The removal of ornate box turtles from the wild in Arizona has been prohibited since 2005.

If you find one: in the wild in southeastern Arizona, let it be; unless it is in harm's way crossing a road, in which case you may gently lift it high enough so its feet are just above the ground and transport it across the road in the direction it was heading. **If you encounter an ornate box turtle in the wild, Game and Fish wants to hear about it.** Please go to the Ornate [Box Turtle Watch website](#) to report the sighting. Your information will be used to improve box turtle management efforts as this species is thought to be in decline in Arizona.

If found in an urban area, anywhere in Maricopa County, or the north or west parts of the state, it is likely an escaped or unlawfully released captive turtle. Please contact the [nearest Game and Fish office](#) to make arrangements to get this turtle into a safe captive environment. If you have to keep the turtle temporarily, place it in a clean, dry box in a quiet spot, either inside or in the shade.

Females have brownish eyes



Males have reddish eyes

