

# Common Snapping Turtle

## Common Snapping Turtle - Pl. 1

(*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*)

**Identification:** 8" - 18 1/2". The Common Snapping Turtle is the largest turtle in New Jersey (not counting sea turtles). The carapace color ranges from light brown to black. The young have three low keels running lengthwise on the carapace, with light spots on the rim. Older animals are smoother. The hingeless plastron is small, an unmarked yellowish or tan. The Common Snapping Turtle has a large head and a long tail that is saw-toothed on top.

**Where to find them:** The Common Snapping Turtle prefers a permanent body of water; it usually prefers fresh water, but may be found in brackish water. This turtle is usually found swimming, lurking under vegetation underwater, or buried in the mud in shallow water. The Snapper is usually not seen basking; instead it basks by floating just below the surface. Be careful if you attempt to handle this animal: it can defend itself vigorously, and the powerful jaws can cause considerable damage.

**When to find them:** Active April through November.

**Range:** Entire state.

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(*Chelydra serpentina*) - text pg. 10

### Key Features

- Large head/sawtoothed tail.
- Carapace: brown-black.
- Plastron: small & hingeless.
- Often fierce when on land.



New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife ~ 2003



Excerpt from: Schwartz, V. & D. Golden, "Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey". New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife 2002.

Order the complete guide at - <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/products.htm>