

Eastern Spiny Softshell

The Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle, an introduced species, is unlike any other species of turtle in New Jersey, with its leathery, flattened shell, and its long narrow snout.

Eastern Spiny Softshell *Introduced Species* - Pl.7

(*Apalone spinifera spinifera*)

Identification: Adult females 6 1/2" - 18", males 5" - 9 1/4". The Eastern Spiny Softshell is almost perfectly round with a very flattened, leathery carapace that lacks scutes. Also note the characteristic long, narrow, tubular snout. Three characteristics that distinguish this from other softshells (which are not found in New Jersey) are streaked and spotted feet, a horizontal ridge in each nostril, and small spiny projections on the carapace. The carapace is light tan, like wet sand; a thin dark line encircles the carapace near the rim. The carapace of the male is marked with dark, round spots, while the female may be somewhat darker and more mottled.

Where to find them: The Eastern Spiny Softshell is typically limited to rivers; however, it can also be found in lakes where mud bars are available. It is sometimes seen floating at the surface, where the shape is easily identifiable. Be careful if handling this species: it can claw and bite fiercely.

When to find them: Active May through September.

Range: An introduced and well-established population in the Maurice River system, Cumberland County and in the Raritan River Watershed.

Eastern Spiny Softshell

(*Apalone spinifera spinifera*) - text pg. 16

Key Features

- Long, narrow, and tubular snout.
- Carapace: flattened, leathery, and lacking scutes.
- Light tan or brown in color.



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>