

# Alligator Snapping Turtle



<sup>1</sup> Alligator snapping turtles are the largest of all freshwater turtles. They may also be the most deceitful of all turtles! Found in the United States, they live in southeastern states from Florida to Texas and as far north as Kansas to Illinois.



<sup>2</sup> Alligator snapping turtles are very easy to identify. They have the three large ridges that run from front to back on their shells. Their heads are pointed and triangular-shaped with powerful jaws. A full-grown alligator snapping turtle can measure about 30 inches long and weigh over 200 pounds.

<sup>3</sup> Alligator snapping turtles feed on fish, frogs, snakes, and other small animals, as well as water plants. They are smart hunters whose secret of success can be summed up in three words -- camouflage, perseverance, and enticement. First, their rough shells look like rocks, allowing these ferocious predators to blend in well with their surroundings. Second, their ability to stay motionless makes them virtually undetectable. Third, they have a small bit of pink flesh on the tip of their tongues that resembles a worm. So, when alligator snapping turtles are hungry, they stay still in the bottom of a river, lake, or swamp, keep their mouths wide open, and wave their worm-like tongues. The wriggling lure catches the attention of a passerby. Sensing no danger, the unsuspecting fish swims near to claim the reward. Just as the fish is ready to swallow the "worm", alligator snapping turtles close their mouths immediately. The fish is either swallowed whole or cut in half by the tips of the alligator snapping turtles' sharp, powerful jaws!

<sup>4</sup> About two months after mating in the spring, female alligator snapping turtles come ashore to lay eggs. They dig nests on sandy beaches not far from the water's edge and lay a clutch of 8-52 eggs there. Once they cover their nests with sand, dirt, and leaves, they return to the water and never come back to check on their offspring.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, the temperature during the incubation period determines the sex of the hatchlings. If the temperature is slightly lower than 82° F, nearly all hatchlings are males. At warmer temperatures, most hatchlings are females. Baby alligator snapping turtles look just like their parents, although much smaller. As soon as they emerge from their eggs, they head to the water and

start their independent lives. Without any parental guidance, baby alligator snapping turtles know instinctively how to hunt and what to eat. They also know that they need to stay away from humans who love to dine on their tasty meat!

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<p>1. In which of the following U.S. states can we find alligator snapping turtles?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Arkansas</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Massachusetts</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Alaska</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Hawaii</p>	<p>2. How many ridges do alligator snapping turtles have on their rough shells?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Nine</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Two</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Three</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Seven</p>
<p>3. Alligator snapping turtles are the world's largest _____ turtle species.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Saltwater</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Freshwater</p>	<p>4. Which of the following statements about alligator snapping turtles is true?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Alligator snapping turtles have a pink, worm-like flesh dangling on their foreheads to lure unsuspecting fish to come near.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Alligator snapping turtles can be found in both North and South America.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Alligator snapping turtles have pointed heads and powerful jaws.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Alligator snapping turtles feed exclusively on fish.</p>
<p>5. Which of the following statements about alligator snapping turtles' breeding behaviors is <b>not</b> true?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Female alligator snapping turtles lay a clutch of 8-52 eggs.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Male alligator snapping turtles do not go ashore to help female alligator snapping turtles to dig out nests.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Alligator snapping turtles mate once a year in the winter.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D The temperature during the incubation period determines the sex of baby alligator snapping turtles.</p>	<p>6. What do alligator snapping turtles use as bait to lure fish or other small animals to get closer?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Pink flesh on their tails</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Pink flesh on their snouts</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Pink flesh on their foreheads</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Pink flesh on their tongues</p>

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| <p>7. If the temperature is about 84° F during the incubation period, nearly all baby alligator snapping turtles will become females.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p>   | <p>8. Which of the following do alligator snapping turtles <b>not</b> eat?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Humans</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Snakes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Water plants</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Fish</p> |
| <p>9. Which of the following best describes alligator snapping turtles?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Though alligator snapping turtles have means to trick small animals to come near them, they often blow their covers by not being able to keep still.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B They measure about 30 meters long and weigh more than 200 kilograms.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Alligator snapping turtles' rock-like shells are effective camouflage.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D After laying a clutch of 8-52 eggs, female alligator snapping turtles stay close to their nests until their babies hatch.</p> | <p>10. Humans hunt alligator snapping turtles for their tasty meat.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p>   |