



eastern box turtle

Terrapene carolina

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Reptilia
Order: Testudines
Family: Emydidae

FEATURES

The eastern box turtle averages four and one-half to six inches in length. Its high, dome-like carapace (upper shell) has a varied color pattern of yellow, orange or olive on a dark background. The female's eyes are brown while the male's eyes are red, making it easy to tell the sexes apart. This turtle has four toes on each hind foot, a short tail and a hinged plastron (lower shell) which allows the animal to completely enclose itself in the shell.

BEHAVIORS

The eastern box turtle lives in woodlands, fields and mud holes. This turtle is mainly terrestrial but may spend time in water or buried in mud during the summer. It buries itself in the soil in winter. Mating may occur in the spring or fall. The female deposits three to eight eggs in a nest in soil during June or July, often at the edge of a wood land. Hatching occurs by September. This turtle eats fungi, fruit and invertebrates.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- lakes, ponds & reservoirs
- Lake Michigan
- marshes
- peatlands
- rivers & streams
- swamps
- temp water supplies
- wet prairies & fens

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

southern 1/2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.