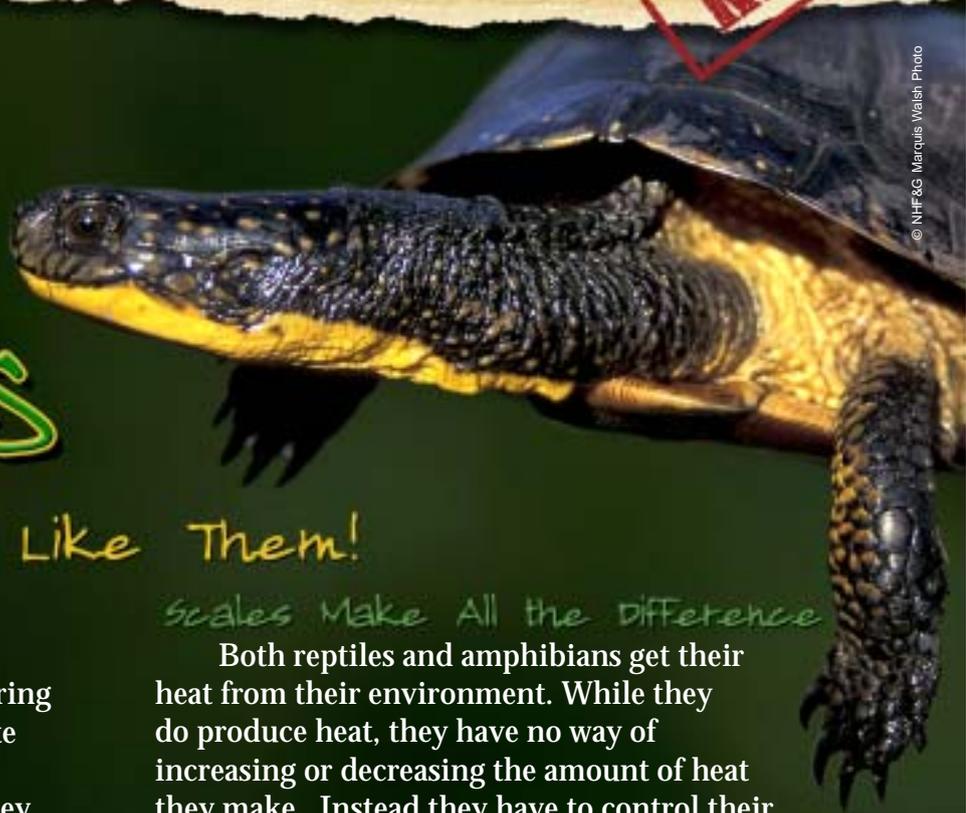


WILD TIMES

FOR KIDS

TURTLES and Snakes



© NHF&G Marquis Walsh Photo

I'm Gonna Learn to Like Them!

Turtles and snakes are part of the group of animals called reptiles. Unlike birds and mammals, snakes and turtles are seen only during the warmer months, because they can't regulate their body temperature.

Snakes often cause us to jump, because they surprise us when they move quickly out of our path. While many people fear snakes because of this behavior, streaking away and hiding is a snake's first defense. New Hampshire has 11 different kinds of snakes.

Turtles are often seen lined up on a log to sun themselves, sometimes crawling on top of one another when space is short. Or, you might have seen them moving slowly across a road. Only seven kinds of turtles make their home here.

Scales Make All the Difference

Both reptiles and amphibians get their heat from their environment. While they do produce heat, they have no way of increasing or decreasing the amount of heat they make. Instead they have to control their body temperatures by moving to shadier or sunnier areas.

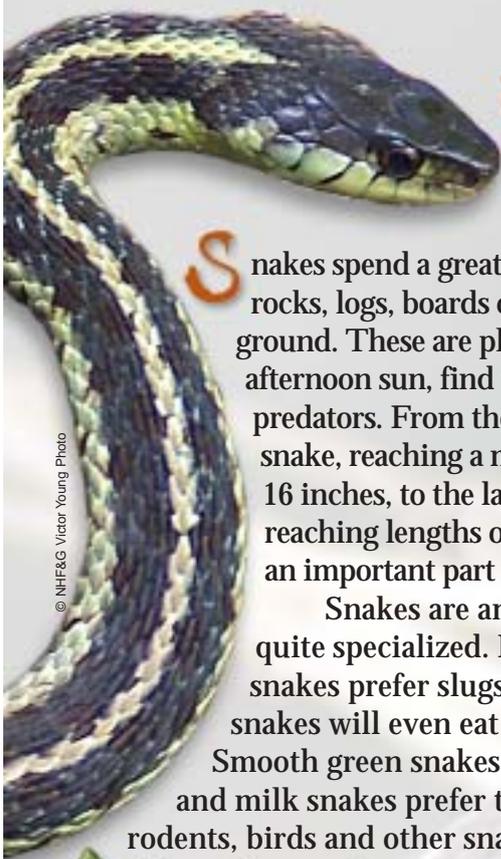
However, reptiles are quite different from amphibians in the way they're built. Turtles and snakes are clad in scales, shields and plates. If they have toes, they have claws. Young snakes and turtles look just like adults, but are smaller. Amphibians have moist skin, and most have no claws on their toes.

Amphibians start out in a watery environment and change their look from younger stages to adulthood.

Let's learn more about these fascinating creatures!

Blanding's turtles (above) and northern water snakes (left) are two of New Hampshire's 18 resident reptiles.





© NHF&G Victor Young Photo

all about SNAKES

Snakes spend a great deal of time beneath rocks, logs, boards or other objects on the ground. These are places to get out of the afternoon sun, find food and escape from predators. From the small redbelly snake, reaching a maximum length of 16 inches, to the largest black racer, reaching lengths of 6 feet, snakes play an important part in the web of life.

Snakes are animal-eaters and are quite specialized. Redbelly and brown snakes prefer slugs and snails. Some snakes will even eat other snakes!

Smooth green snakes like to eat insects, and milk snakes prefer to make a meal out of rodents, birds and other snakes. Other animals

↑ *The eastern garter snake gives birth to live young. It is New Hampshire's most common snake.*

will eat snakes, too. Hawks, owls, crows, blue jays and other birds, as well as raccoons and opossums, will eat young or older snakes.

Snakes reproduce in two ways — some lay eggs, while others give live birth. Ringneck snakes lay one to ten eggs in June or July, while large eastern hognose snakes may lay up to 60 eggs in July. In contrast, a large northern water snake may give birth to 60 live young in August or September. Garter snakes are one of most common snakes and may have from 7 to 85 young, depending on the size of the mother.



© Allen Sheldon Photo

One of New Hampshire's largest snakes, the northern black racer will commonly grow over six feet in length.

TURTLES... it's all in the

The difference between turtles and other reptiles is that they have a shell. This shell encloses the turtle's body. Within this armor, the soft body parts of the turtle are protected. The shell is divided into two parts: the upper, or top, shell is called the carapace, and the bottom shell is called the plastron. A turtle can't walk out of its

The eastern painted turtle is New Hampshire's most common turtle.

shell. The outer shell is made of a thin layer of keratin, like your fingernails. But underneath that layer is a layer of bony plates giving it its shape. The ribs and backbone are part of the shell.

While all turtles have some type of shell, there are big differences in the protection the shell provides. American box turtles have a hinge on the lower shell, which allows them to pull their head and feet inside their shells and close the front and rear opening up tightly. Musk turtles also have hinges, but can't completely close up. Painted and spotted turtles have large protective shells, but no hinges. Flesh is exposed, even when the turtles are completely tucked in. Snapping



© Corel Photo

Cases of Mistaken Identity

Timber rattlesnakes are a member of a group of snakes known as pit vipers and are the rarest snake in New Hampshire. These snakes use venom, or poison, to kill their prey. There are fewer than 30 adult timber rattlesnakes in New Hampshire.

They are nearly black, with a black velvety tail that has a rattle at the end. Timber rattlesnakes will survive only if we accept them as being an important piece of our state's web of life.

Because people fear snakes, they often think a snake is poisonous because it coils or shakes its tail. Several snakes behave in ways that people think will harm them, but they are really quite harmless. If you see a patterned snake with reddish-brown blotches and it shakes its tail, it is a milk snake. Milk snakes are commonly found in

Equipped with its own alarm system, the timber rattlesnake shakes its tail to warn intruders.

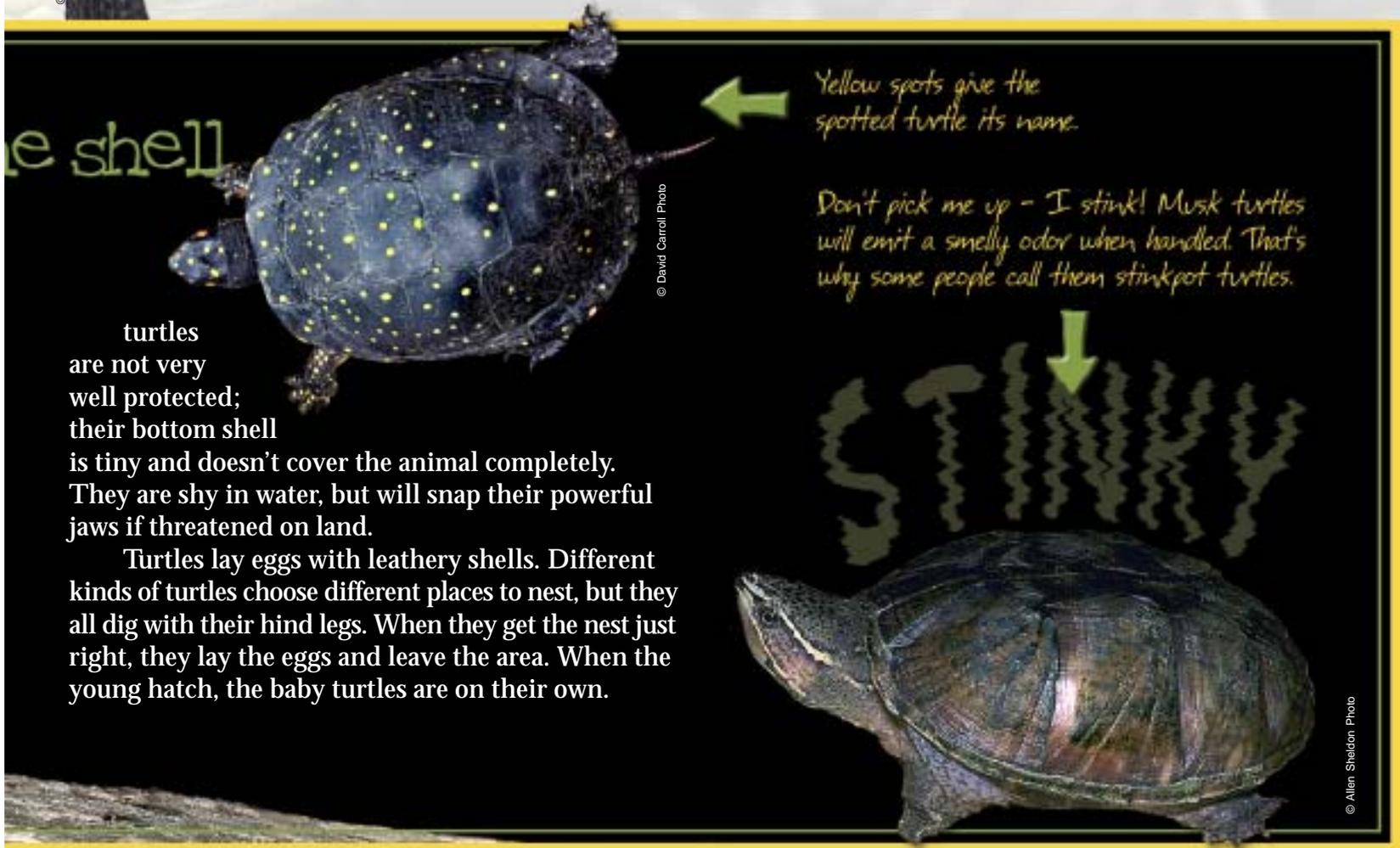
the forests and fields of southern New Hampshire. The eastern hognose goes



When threatened, the eastern hognose snake will spread its head into a hood, much like a cobra.

through an elaborate bluff when threatened: first, it spreads its head into a hood, hisses loudly and strikes with its mouth closed. If the threat doesn't disappear, it will wiggle as though it is dying, roll on its back and let its tongue hang out.

Another misunderstood snake is the northern water snake. Just because this snake is often found in water and is a great swimmer, people often think that it is the venomous water moccasin (cottonmouth), a snake that doesn't live here at all.



the shell

turtles are not very well protected; their bottom shell is tiny and doesn't cover the animal completely. They are shy in water, but will snap their powerful jaws if threatened on land.

Turtles lay eggs with leathery shells. Different kinds of turtles choose different places to nest, but they all dig with their hind legs. When they get the nest just right, they lay the eggs and leave the area. When the young hatch, the baby turtles are on their own.

Yellow spots give the spotted turtle its name.

Don't pick me up - I stink! Musk turtles will emit a smelly odor when handled. That's why some people call them stinkpot turtles.

eastern box turtle

© Dwight Kuhn Photo



snapshots

milk snake

© Jeff LeClere Photo



snapshots

blanding's turtle

© NHF&G Photo



snapshots

northern water snake

© Alan Briere Photo



snapshots

snapping turtle

© NHF&G Photo



snapshots

smooth green snake

© Jeff LeClere Photo



snapshots

wood turtle

© NHF&G Photo



snapshots

redbelly snake

© NHF&G video Young Photo



snapshots



MILK SNAKE

EATS: Mice, other small mammals, birds and other snakes

HABITAT: Forests and fields

FAST FACTS:

- Name comes from the fact they are common around barns and the fable that they stole milk from cows
- Active at night
- Can rapidly vibrate tail, producing a buzzing sound
- Lays 3-20 eggs in June or July



EASTERN BOX TURTLE

EATS: Earthworms, slugs, snails, insects, crayfish, frogs, toads, snakes, carrion, leaves, grass, berries, fruits and fungi

HABITAT: Woodlands, field edges, thickets, marshes, stream banks

FAST FACTS:

- Widespread in southern New England coastal areas, but uncommon in New Hampshire
- Younger turtles mainly carnivorous, older turtles more herbivorous
- Able to close its hinged belly shell tightly against its backshell
- Active during the day



NORTHERN WATER SNAKE

EATS: Primarily fish; will eat other aquatic animals

HABITAT: Anywhere there is water in the southern half of the state

FAST FACTS

- Belly is marked with dark half-moons, often strangely colored
- Is not poisonous, but may inflict a wound if handled
- Males reach sexual maturity at 2 years, females at 3 years
- Gives birth to up to 60 live young, depending on the size of the mother
- Is most active at night



BLANDING'S TURTLE

EATS: Insects, aquatic vegetation, crustaceans and crayfish

HABITAT: Shallow water, but often wanders on land

FAST FACTS

- Bright yellow chin on adults
- May live up to 100 years!
- Reaches sexual maturity in 13 years or more
- Lays 6-17 eggs, usually in May or June
- Species of concern; protected from collection, possession and sale



SMOOTH GREEN SNAKE

EATS: Insects, salamanders, spiders and snails

HABITAT: Meadows, fields, open woods with grassy areas

FAST FACTS:

- Rarely exceeds two feet in length
- Reaches sexual maturity in its second year
- Lays 3-12 eggs in underground cavities
- Eggs hatch in as little as 4 days, although 3 weeks is more common



SNAPPING TURTLE

EATS: Aquatic animals such as fish and frogs; a third of its diet may be plant material

HABITAT: Found in standing or slow-moving water

FAST FACTS:

- Often buries itself in leaves or mud and waits to ambush prey
- Only comes on land to lay eggs or to move from one waterbody to another
- Nests in June or July; young turtles hatch in September or October
- Won't bother you, if you don't bother it!



REDBELLY SNAKE

EATS: Slugs, snails and earthworms

HABITAT: Found throughout the state in marshy areas, as well as woods

FAST FACTS:

- Has a bright red-orange belly
- Has jaws and long, thin teeth that allow it to twist snails out of shells
- At most a foot in length
- Gives birth to 1-14 live young in August or September



WOOD TURTLE

EATS: A variety of plants and animals, including earthworms

HABITAT: Found on land near streams, where it hibernates in winter

FAST FACTS:

- Thumps the ground to make earthworms believe it is raining, so the worms emerge
- Most terrestrial of all turtles (it spends the most time on land)
- Lays 4-18 eggs in late May or June; eggs hatch in August or September
- Species of concern; protected from collection, possession and sale

Let's Play

NAME THAT REPTILE!

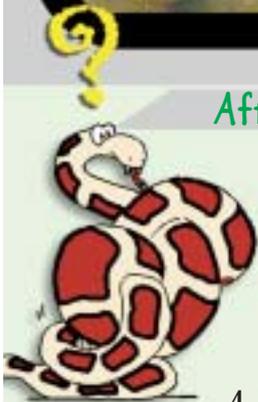
Brought to you by New Hampshire Fish and Game



Write Your Answers Here

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

After reading this issue, identify each photo above by reading the reptile's clue given below.



1. When frightened, I put on the biggest bluff.
2. I like to thump the ground to make earthworms believe it is raining.
3. I'm New Hampshire's only endangered snake.
4. I'm covered with yellow or orange spots.
5. I'm New Hampshire's most common snake.
6. With powerful jaws I ambush my prey from under the mud.
7. I live in and around water and some people think I'm poisonous – but I'm not.
8. I'm New Hampshire's most common turtle.
9. My tail can fake a rattle noise, but I'm not poisonous.

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Arlington, VA 22203

9. Milk snake
8. Eastern painted turtle
7. Northern water snake
6. Snapping turtle

ANSWERS TO
"NAME THAT REPTILE"

1. Hognose snake
2. Wood turtle
3. Timber rattlesnake
4. Spotted turtle
5. Garter snake



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