

Marine Science Center Resident Freshwater Animal Guide



Diamondback Terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin

- ▶ **Range:** United States East Coast , Key West to Cape Cod
- ▶ **Habitat:** Brackish coastal tidal marshes
- ▶ **Diet:** Shrimp, clams, crabs, mussels and other marine invertebrates, especially periwinkle snails
- ▶ **Size:** Males average 5 inches, Females average 7.5 inches
- ▶ **Life Span:** 25 to 40 years
- ▶ **Diamondback Terrapin** are well adapted to live in brackish water. Their skin is impermeable to salt, they have special salt glands, and they can distinguish between salt and freshwater for drinking. The species was once considered a delicacy to eat and was hunted almost to extinction. They are now classified as Near Threatened by the IUCN.
- ▶ **MSC:** You can find Darla on display in our freshwater pond exhibit



Ouachita Map Turtle

Graptemys ouachitensis

- **Habitat:** Found in damp environments, such as wetlands, marshlands, and near swamps, but usually does not enter water deep enough to swim.¹
- **Range:** Native to the Mississippi River, north to Minnesota
- **Diet:** Omnivores, Map turtles will enthusiastically eat small fish, bugs, or worms, as well as leaves and fibrous vegetation
- **Size:** Adults reach a length of 5 to 10 inches
- **Life Span:** 15 to 20 years
- **Ouchita Map Turtles** are distinguished by a keel that runs the length of the center of their carapace. They are given the name Map Turtle due to the map-like markings on the carapace. The Ouachita Map Turtle is not native to Florida. They are native to the Mississippi River, north to Minnesota.
- **MSC:** : You can find Map on display in our Freshwater Exhibit



Yellow Belly Slider

Trachemys scripta

- ▶ **Habitat:** Can be found in rivers, ponds, and lakes
- ▶ **Range:** Native in Florida, but considered invasive some regions of the United States
- ▶ **Diet:** Omnivores, Sliders will enthusiastically eat small fish, bugs, or worms, as well as leaves and fibrous vegetation
- ▶ **Size:** Adults reach a length of 8 to 13 inches
- ▶ **Life Span:** up to 30 years
- ▶ **The Yellow Belly Slider** can be identified from other sliders by a yellow blotch behind the eye. Both its front and hind legs are marked with narrow, yellow stripes. Females nest from early spring into summer, wandering some distance from the water searching for proper soil conditions to nest. This nesting process leaves them susceptible to car hits.
- ▶ **MSC:** : You can find Mama in our Freshwater Exhibit



Peninsula Cooter

Pseudemys floridana peninsularis

- **Habitat:** can be found in rivers, ponds, and lakes
- **Range:** Throughout Florida
- **Diet:** Omnivores, Cooters will enthusiastically eat small fish, bugs, or worms, as well as leaves and fibrous vegetation
- **Size:** Adults reach a length of 8 to 15 inches
- **Life Span:** up to 40 years
- **The Peninsula Cooter** is very similar to other cooters, but can be distinguished by the differences in head markings. There are two yellow, hairpin-shaped-markings on top of the head. Members of the genus *Pseudemys* are among the largest of the Emydidae family with lengths reaching 44 cm and weighing up to 22 pounds.
- **MSC:** : You can find Rocky in our Freshwater Exhibit, bitten by raccoon, missing a portion of right front and left rear foot, non-releasable



River Cooter

Pseudemys concinna

- **Habitat:** Found in rivers with moderate current, as well as lakes and tidal marshes
- **Range:** Central and Southeastern United States
- **Diet:** Omnivores, Cooters will enthusiastically eat small fish, bugs, or worms, as well as leaves and fibrous vegetation
- **Size:** Adults reach a length of 8 to 15 inches
- **Life Span:** up to 40 years
- **River Cooters** enjoy basking on logs or sun-warmed rocks, and are frequently found in the company of other aquatic basking turtles, sometimes piled up on top of each other. Diurnal by nature, these turtles wake with the warming sun to bask and forage, and sleep in the water, hidden under vegetation.
- **MSC:** : You can find River in our Freshwater Exhibit, very long claws, c shaped markings on carapace scutes



Chicken Turtle

Deirochelys reticularia

- **Habitat:** Chicken turtles are semi-aquatic turtles, found both in water and on land. They prefer quiet, still bodies of water such as shallow ponds and lakes, ditches, marshes, and cypress swamps
- **Range:** Southeastern United States
- **Diet:** Chicken turtles are omnivorous, eating crayfish, fish, fruits, insects, invertebrates, frogs, tadpoles, and plants
- **Size:** Adults reach a length of 4 to 8 inches
- **Life Span:** up to 20 years
- **Chicken Turtles** get their name from the taste of their meat, which used to be popular in southern markets. They are regularly encountered on land, migrating between aquatic habitats or seeking areas to burrow into the soil and escape dry conditions.
- **MSC:** : You can find Jenny and Forrest in Freshwater Exhibit, Forrest's shell slightly crushed on one side, Jenny missing right eye, non-releasable



Vermiculated Sailfin or Suckermouth Catfish

Pterygoplichthys disjunctivus

- **Suckermouth Catfish** is named for its mouth, which allows it to adhere to a surface and grasp onto food. Loricariidae catfishes have evolved several modifications of the digestive tract that function as accessory respiratory organs, which allows them to have a slight ability to breathe air. They are non-native to Florida but have been introduced from the aquarium trade.
- **MSC:** You can find Vermiculated Sailfin Catfish in our Freshwater Exhibit



Florida Gar

Lepisosteus platyrhincus

- **Gars** can be found in lowland streams, canals, and lakes with muddy or sandy bottoms near underwater vegetation. They use an air bladder to breathe air which helps them survive in poorly oxygenated waters. The Florida Gar can reach a length of over three feet and consume a diet of fish, shrimp, and crayfish.
- **MSC:** You can find Florida Gar in our Freshwater Exhibit

