



## Eastern Box Turtle

*Terrapene carolina carolina*

Eastern box turtle is a land turtle.

They have a high, dome-shaped carapace or upper shell, and a hinged plastron (bottom shell) that allows them to close up entirely. While the colors of the shells may vary slightly, it is normally brownish-black with yellowish-orange radiating splotches, spots and/or lines. The box turtles skin also varies, but is predominately brown or black with some orange, yellow or whitish streaks.

Eastern box turtles have a horned beak and stout legs. There are normally five toes on the front feet and four on the back feet.

Eastern box turtles average 4.5 inches to 6 inches. They are long lived, with some in captivity reaching over 100 years of age. In the wild, disease and predation will shorten that life span.

Eastern box turtles can be found in deciduous or mixed forests with damp forest floors.

Eastern box turtles are a species of special concern in NJ. That means they need special attention because they are vulnerable to deteriorating environments and habitat changes. If the environment or habitat of the eastern box turtle begins to degrade or continues, the species may become listed as threatened.



### **Ask A Naturalist**

Fun facts about eastern box turtles:

- They hibernate.
- They can pull their head and legs in and totally close their shell.
- Young turtles cannot fully close their shells until they are 4 or 5 years old.
- They are diurnal, which means they are most active at dawn and dusk.
- Eastern box turtles can retain water better than other turtles.

