

Turtle Identification Guide

Upper Michigan



Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*): The low, smooth carapace is black or olive, with red markings along or under the margins. Plastron yellow or orange with dark central blotch or figure. Head yellow striped, neck and limbs red or yellow striped. Adult carapace measures 4 to 9.8 inches (10 to 25 cm).



Spiny Soft-shell Turtle (*Apalone spinifera spinifera*): Smooth, flat, "rubbery," skin-covered shell lacks scutes and has flexible edges. Brown or olive carapace covered with black circles and spots in males and juveniles, dark blotches in females. Nose long and pig like, all feet fully webbed. Adult female carapace measures 7 to 19 inches (18 to 48 cm). Adult male carapace measures 5 to 9.25 inches (12.7 to 23 cm). Common in the Lower Peninsula.

Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*): Broad gray, brown, or olive (often algae covered) carapace with jagged rear edge. Plastron small, cross shaped. Tail very long, topped with row of large triangular scales. Adult carapace measures 8 to 19.3 inches (20 to 49 cm). This is the largest turtle in Michigan.



Blanding's Turtle (*Emys blandingii*): Carapace smooth and dome like, black, often with yellow speckles. Plastron with crosswise hinge, yellow with black outer blotches. Head and upper neck black, throat and lower neck bright yellow. Male has concave plastron. Carapace of an adult measures 6 to 10.75 inches (15.2 to 27.4 cm). Protected in MI as a special species of concern.

Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*): The shell of the wood turtle is one of the most ornate of the turtles in Michigan. A noticeable keel running down the back of the carapace and the pointed edges of the scutes along the back edge add to its sculpted appearance. The yellow on the underparts of its neck, legs, and stomach, plus the highly visible deep circular growth rings of the scutes on the brownish carapace help with identification. The adult carapace length is 6.3 to 9.4 inches (16 to 24 cm). Common in riverine habitats, less common in lake or wetland systems. Rare in the Upper Peninsula and are protected in MI as a special species of concern.