

Common Musk Turtle

Common Musk Turtle [Stinkpot] - Pl. 1

(*Sternotherus odoratus*)

Identification: 2" - 5 3/8". The Common Musk Turtle has an olive-brown to black carapace, sometimes marked with dark spots or streaks. The carapace is smooth and domed, and may have green algae growing on its surface. The plastron is yellow to brown. Two key identifying features on the relatively small plastron are: (1) a single hinge, and (2) squarish pectoral scutes (just in front of the hinge). Other key features are two light stripes on the head (these may be hidden by dark pigment), and barbels (small fleshy projections) on the chin and throat.

Where to find them: The Common Musk Turtle can be found in still or slow-moving bodies of water, where it prefers to walk slowly along the bottom. It basks just at or below the surface, but can also be seen basking on fallen trees and branches overhanging the water.

When to find them: Active April through October.

Range: Entire state.

Note: In New Jersey, the turtle most similar to this is the Eastern Mud Turtle, which lacks the stripes and the barbels, and has two hinges instead of one.

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Key Features

- Carapace: smooth & domed.
- Plastron: small with single hinge.
- Barbels on chin, two light stripes on head.



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Excerpt from: Schwartz, V. & D. Golden, "Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey". New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife 2002.

Order the complete guide at - <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/products.htm>