

Eastern Box Turtle

Box Turtles are known for their ability to hide in their shells, closing the doors to all threats. New Jersey has one species of Box Turtle, the Eastern Box Turtle.

Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) - Pl.4

Identification: 4 “ - 8 1/2”. The combination of the high, domed, weakly keeled carapace, and the hinged plastron that can tightly close front and back, make the Eastern Box Turtle distinct from all other turtles in New Jersey. The carapace and plastron have yellow, orange, olive or tan markings on a brown or black background; different animals may show relatively more dark or light coloration. The Eastern Box Turtle has a hooked upper jaw, and four toes on each hind foot. The male has a central concave area in the rear lobe of the plastron, while the female has a flatter or more convex plastron. Most males have red eyes; females have yellow-brown eyes. Young have flatter, less ornate shells.

Where to find them: The Eastern Box Turtle is our most terrestrial species. It prefers woods and meadows. In hot, dry weather it may be found in muddy areas or shallow pools, or hiding under rotten logs or other decaying vegetation.

When to find them: Active April through September.

Range: Entire state.

Eastern Box Turtle

(*Terrapene carolina carolina*)

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Key Features

- Carapace: highly domed and weakly keeled.
- Plastron: hinged.
- The carapace & plastron both have yellow, orange, olive, or tan markings on a brown or black background.



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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>