

# EASTERN SNAPPING TURTLE

*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*

By: Pearl Beamer

muskrats, aquatic plants and algae. The adult snappers have one primary predator; MAN!!!



The Eastern Snapping Turtle has a flattened carapace (upper shell) with knobby keels that smooth out with age. They can reach up to 19 inches in length and weighing from

10-35 pounds. It has a large head, small plastron

(lower shell), and a long saw-toothed tail on the upper side. The carapace is brown and the plastron is cream to light brown with various degrees of black in it. The skin on the head, neck



and limbs is dark brown to black. The large head has a blunt protruding snout. The carapace is often covered with algae. Breeding season is from April to November.

Incubation is from 80-90 days and laying of the eggs usually happens in June. The eggs are hard shelled, white and spherical (like ping-pong balls) in



shape. They lay their eggs in a flask shaped hole that the females dig in a variety of soils.

The snapping turtle is found throughout the state of Virginia including on some of the barrier islands. They have a large range of habitat. They are found in rivers, swamps, ponds, lakes, streams, freshwater, and brackish marshes. They are usually active from March through October but can be found any time of the year.

They prefer dead but not rotting fish but they will also eat, crayfish, toads, frogs, terrestrial insects,