

## *Chinemys reevesii* (Reeve's Turtle) Care – Darrell Senneke

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This care sheet is intended only to cover the general care of this species. Continued research in order to best develop a maintenance plan for whichever species you are caring for is essential.

In this author's opinion by far the best turtle for a beginner is a captive born Reeve's turtle. Incredibly easy to tame and very personable, they are the golden retriever of the aquatic turtle set. The species originates in China, Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong. In the wild its habitat is shallow wetlands and the land that immediately surrounds them. The diminutive Reeve's turtle has a carapace that can range from black to a tan color with three distinct keels that smooth out somewhat as it ages. It also sports broken yellow lines on the head and neck. The skin exhibits the same range of colors as the carapace. Adult Reeve's turtles typically reach a maximum of 12 cm (5 inches) but area variants have been known to reach 30 cm (12 inches) in length.

As it is one of the easiest species to breed, it is possible to purchase these turtles from captive born stock. I would strongly suggest that one not purchase a wild caught Reeve's turtle. While captive born stock is very hardy, the stress of capture, handling, containment with other species and the shipping of wild caught Reeve's and Asian species in general leads to a severely debilitated animal that tends to be in need of immediate veterinary care. This care sheet will deal primarily with hatchling care, as that is the most critical stage of their lives as well as the age that they are most likely to be purchased.

### HOUSING REEVE'S TURTLES

**INDOORS** – Reeve's turtles are more accurately termed a "semi-aquatic". In the wild they tend to spend a fair amount of time on land much as Central American Wood turtles do. Hatchlings though, are almost totally aquatic, leaving the water primarily to bask. As they age they become progressively more terrestrial but are never found far from water. In captivity they are generally treated as an aquatic species and adapt well to aquarium management. The most useful form of indoor accommodation for hatchling *Chinemys reevesii* consists of a shallow aquarium or plastic

sweaterbox. While they are at home in water they are fairly poor swimmers, I would suggest a water depth of 2 inches (5 cm) or less to allow them to "stand" on the bottom and reach the surface to breathe without difficulty. If this type of arrangement is used an area should be built up in one end of the habitat to provide a dry basking area. In this arrangement, because of the shallowness of the water, filtration is difficult and uneaten food can be missed and rapidly foul the water.



**Reeve's Turtle - *Chinemys reevesii***

- **Location** – China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan
- **Habitat** – Wetlands, pond and streams
- **Size** – 12 cm (5 inches) – see variants to 30 cm (12 inches)
- **Diet** – omnivorous – greens, insects, earthworms and fish
- **Threats** – Food Markets, traditional medicines
- **Alternate Name** – Chinese 3-keeled pond turtle

The infographic includes a map of East Asia with a red circle highlighting the species' range. Two photographs show the turtle in its natural habitat and in a controlled environment.

As an alternative to this what I use for Reeve's, for all other hatchling semi-aquatics and most aquatic species is an undecorated "slant tank". A sweaterbox measuring about 24 inches by 16 inches (60 cm by 40 cm) is propped up on one end to provide a slanted bottom, resulting in a water depth at the lowest end of 2 inches (5 cm) and a dry area at the shallow end. As this is undecorated it is easily cleaned on a frequent basis. The addition of live or plastic water plants add to the sense of security for the animals and in the case of live plants may provide an additional food source. As the animal grows the size of this habitat and depth of water should be increased.

At 6 cm (2.5 inches) or so, Reeve's turtles can be moved out of this arrangement and into a proper aquarium. A reasonable size aquarium for a Reeve's turtle of this size is a 20 gallon: 75 cm by 30 cm (30 inches by 12 inches). As the animal grows the size of this habitat should be increased. A water depth of 20 cm up to 40 cm (8 inches to 16 inches) would be fine for turtles between 6 cm (2.5 inches) and the typical adult size of 12.5 cm (5 inches).

Water quality is very important. Because of the shallowness of the water in a "slant tank" filtration may not be practical. In this event frequent water changes are a must. For adult Reeve's turtles we advise canister filters as they are easily cleaned and provide for excellent water quality. Many problems with aquatic turtles can be averted if one spends a little time and money designing and purchasing an adequate filtration system for your pets.

Reeve's turtles are often seen basking on logs or rocks in nature. To provide a basking site in an artificial setup a hardware store reflector clip light lamp should be positioned over the dry end of the environment. This should be positioned at a height to provide a basking spot of 90 degrees F or so (32 degrees C) in that section of the habitat. The habitat should also be equipped with a full spectrum fluorescent light to provide for UVB. A UVB source is necessary for Vitamin D3 syntheses (needed in calcium metabolism). If preferred to this lighting arrangement a Mercury vapor bulb may be used that fulfills all requirements.

**DIET.** Reeve's turtle hatchlings take rapidly take to many offered foods. Be careful not to overfeed them, I recommend only feeding once every day or every other day for the rapidly growing hatchlings. Hatchling Reeve's turtles are very carnivorous and will eagerly consume insects and worms and thawed frozen fish but will also consume some greens. Any aquatic vegetation such as duckweed will also be appreciated. As they age they tend to take a higher percentage of vegetation. Many of the commercially prepared turtle diets as well as Koi or Catfish foods that exist on the market today are excellent hatchling Reeve's turtle food.

Additional calcium supplementation is essential. Powdered calcium can be sprinkled all foods. It is suggested that one use calcium supplemented with vitamin D3 if the animal is being maintained indoors and calcium without D3 if it is outdoors. Provision of a cuttlefish bone, which can be gnawed if desired, is also recommended. Addition of multivitamins if a commercially prepared turtle diet is NOT used is essential for proper fat metabolism. The freezing process for fish destroys the vitamin E, which is an important component for maintaining a healthy Reeve's turtle.

**OUTDOOR HOUSING** - Once your turtle is over 3 inches (7.5 cm) in size predator-proof outdoor habitats offer many advantages over indoor accommodations and should seriously be considered as an option. A child's wading pool sunk into the ground in a secure enclosure makes for a serviceable outdoor habitat. Larger ponds with advanced filtration can be used to provide a spectacular outdoor home for your Reeve's turtles.

There is some indication that in certain areas Reeve's turtles hibernate, I would not suggest attempting this without knowing precisely the point of origin for the ancestors of your turtle.

It should be noted that turtle and tortoise care research is ongoing. As new information becomes available we share this on the World Chelonian Trust web site at [www.chelonia.org](http://www.chelonia.org). Serious keepers find it to be a benefit to have the support of others who keep these species. Care is discussed in our free online email community, which may be joined from the web address above. Please contact us about the many benefits of becoming a member of the World Chelonian Trust.

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World Chelonian Trust  
685 Bridge Street Plaza PMB# 292  
Owatonna, MN  
55060