

Graptemys barbouri, Barbour's Map Turtle

Graptemys ernsti, Escambia Map Turtle

Graptemys geographica, Common Map Turtle

Graptemys kohnii, Mississippi Map Turtle

Graptemys oculifera, Ringed Map Turtle

Graptemys pseudogeographica, False Map Turtle

Graptemys caglei, Cagle's Map Turtle

Graptemys flavimaculata, Yellow-blotched Map Turtle

Graptemys gibbonsi, Pascagoula Map Turtle

Graptemys nigrinoda, Black-knobbed Map Turtle

Graptemys ouachitensis, Ouachita Map Turtle

Graptemys pulchra, Alabama Map Turtle



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

One of the largest Genera in terms of the number of species is *Graptemys* – the Map turtles. Some naturalists are fond of saying that every watershed East of the Rocky Mountains and North of Mexico in North America is host to its own species. While that may be somewhat of an exaggeration it is true that there are many species and considerable diversity in the Genus. These species are more carnivorous than most turtles with a natural diet that relies heavily on snails, crustaceans and mollusks. Map turtles are sexually dimorphic with males being considerable smaller than females. The typical adult size of males is 5 inches (12 cm) while females may reach 12 inches (30 cm) in length.

Long ago map turtles could often be found mixed in with the Red-ear Sliders in “five and dime” stores in the United States. Unfortunately these turtles (most of whom were *Graptemys geographica*) usually shared the same fate as the sliders: improper care followed by an early death. Present knowledge and technology makes it an easily maintained animal as long as a person is willing to provide some basic requirements. Thanks to the success that breeders are having with these species it is now possible to purchase many of these species as hatchlings from captive born stock. Many of the species are threatened or endangered in nature, do not remove these animals from the wild.



HOUSING MAP TURTLES INDOORS - The most useful form of indoor accommodation for *Graptemys* consists of an aquarium. For hatchlings I would suggest a water depth of 3 to 6 inches (7.5 to 15 cm) with one end built up with rocks to provide a dry basking spot. A reasonable size aquarium for a hatchling is a 20 gallon: 30 inches by 12 inches, (75 cm by 30 cm). As the animal

grows the size of this habitat should be increased. All Map turtles are excellent swimmers so water depth is not as critical a factor as they get older.. A depth of 10 inches up to 30 inches (25 cm to 75 cm) would be fine for turtles between 4 inches (10 cm) and adult size which can reach 8 inches (20 cm).

Water quality is very important. 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. For adult Map turtles we advise canister filters as they are easily cleaned and provide for excellent water quality. Hatchlings are more difficult to provide good filtration for because of the depth of the water, for these a submersible foam filter or power filter and **frequent** water changes is the rule. .

In one corner of the environment a hardware store reflector clip light lamp should be positioned over a dry basking area to provide artificial basking facilities. This should be positioned 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. Live or plastic aquatic plants are suggested to provide a sense of security and hiding places.

OUTDOOR HOUSING - Predator proof outdoor habitats offer many advantages over indoor accommodations and should seriously be considered as an option during warm weather. 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 Map turtle.

DIET. Be careful not to overfeed your *Graptemys*. I recommend only feeding 2 to 3 times a week for adult turtles and every day or every other day for the rapidly growing hatchlings. Map turtles are highly carnivorous and crayfish, snails, insects, worms may make up a large part of their diet. Some vegetable matter is also taken with hatchlings eating more duckweed and water plants than the adults. Many of the commercially prepared turtle diets that exist on the market today are excellent Map 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.

Some of these species hibernate in nature. After careful research of methods used to safely do this, hibernation facilities may be provided for those that do so.

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. 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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