

Rare Animals of Louisiana

Alligator Snapping Turtle

Macrochelys temminckii

Rarity Rank: S3/G3G4

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



Identification:

- Has webbed toes, an upper jaw with a strongly hooked beak, and the eyes are positioned on the side of the head and therefore cannot be seen from above
- Three peaked heels on carapace, which is dark brown and usually has algal growth
- Five pairs of plastral scutes
- Plastron is small, narrow and cross-shaped with a long, narrow bridge

Habitat:

- May be found in swamps with rivers close by, but mainly found in large rivers, canals, lakes and oxbows
- Most commonly in freshwater lakes and bayous, but also found in coastal marshes

Food habits:

- Turtles, fishes, aquatic snails, crustaceans, clams, carrion and some plant matter
- May actively pursue prey but is also known to lie concealed, underwater and use its tongue's worm-like appendage to entice prey

Range:

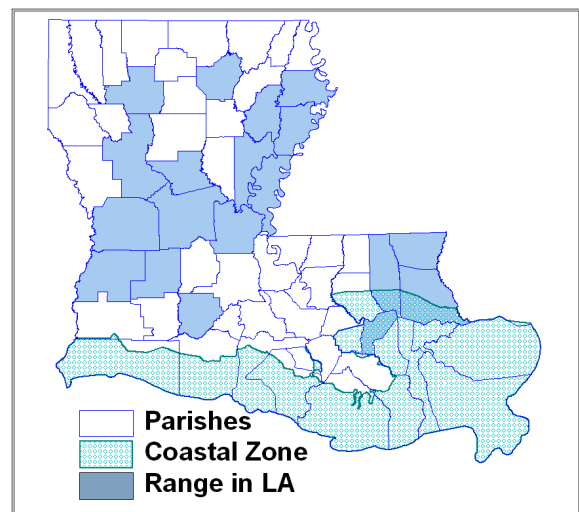
In Louisiana can be located statewide but less commonly in marshes

Reproduction:

- In southeastern LA, eggs are laid mid April to late May and from mid May to early June in northeastern areas
- May have one clutch per year or one every other year. Clutch size averages from 16 to 38
- Large, leathery eggs

Threats:

- In the past, commercial turtle harvesting and selling has depleted population size, though has since been legally banned
- Dredging disturbances to stream ecosystems



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Beneficial Management Practices:

- Legal protection of the species due to declining populations
- Reduce dredging activities

LA River Basins:

Pearl, Pontchartrain, Barataria, Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine, Red, Ouachita



Photos from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

References:

Dundee, Harold A., and Douglas A. Rossman. The Amphibians and Reptiles of Louisiana. Louisville: Louisiana State UP, 1996. 176-178. (Accessed: June 19, 2007).