



Eastern Chicken Turtle



Bog Turtle



Diamondback Terrapin



Box turtle



Spotted Turtle



Yellowbelly Slider



River Cooter



Painted Turtle



Redbelly Turtle



Eastern Spiny Softshell



Gulf Coast Spiny Softshell



Cumberland Slider

Senate Bill 825

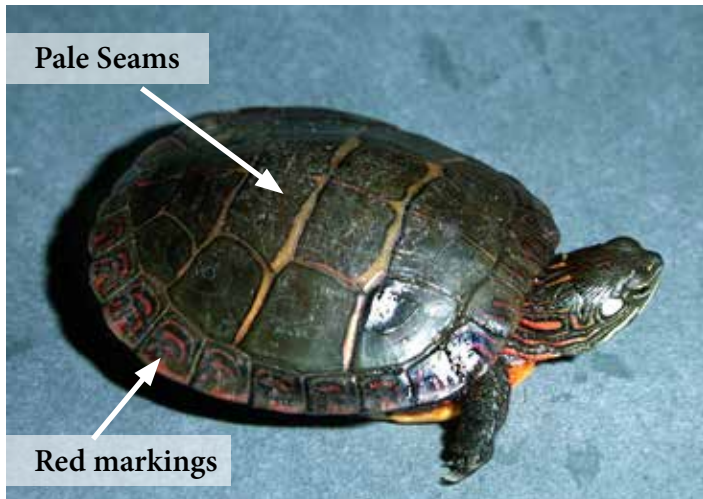
This law, which became effective July 1, 2003, authorizes the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to protect certain reptiles and amphibians that require conservation measures. Senate Bill 825 prohibits the “commercial taking” of the 11 species and one subspecies of turtles and terrapins in the families Emydidae and Trionychidae pictured on this page. These are large basking turtles, sliding turtles and terrapins. “Commercial taking” is defined as the taking, possession, collection, transportation, purchase or sale of five or more individual turtles or terrapins from either of the two families described above.

Any person who violates this section is guilty of a class 3 misdemeanor, which, unless otherwise provided, incurs a fine of up to \$200 as stipulated by a judge.

For collection of more than four turtles and terrapins not in the families of Emydidae and Trionychidae, a scientific collection license must be issued by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

Identification of Species Emydidae Family

Protected Species Under SB 825



Dorsal view of an adult Eastern Painted Turtle

Alvin Braswell



Eastern Painted Turtle: yellow plastron stained reddish

Jodie Owen

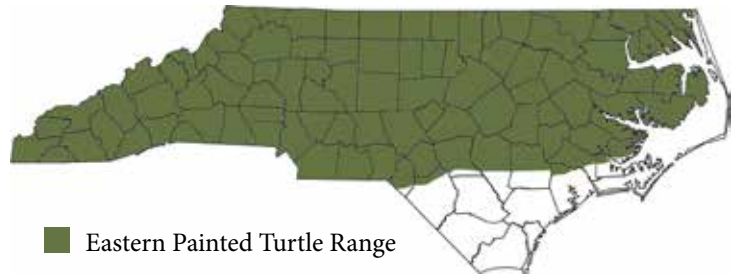


Pale seams can be seen easily.

Jodie Owen

Eastern Painted Turtle

Chrysemys picta picta



Eastern Painted Turtle Range

Average Adult Length: 4 to 7"

Identifying characteristics: The Eastern Painted Turtle is a small aquatic turtle that is brightly marked. Adults have smooth shells about 4 to 7 inches long. It has a relatively flat upper shell with red and yellow markings on a black or greenish-brown background. The Eastern Painted Turtle has conspicuous pale seams between carapacial scutes, especially along anterior margins of second and third vertebrae and pleurals (top and bottom photos). These relatively straight lines across the carapace often can be seen on basking turtles through binoculars for field identification. Its plastron is hingeless, typically plain yellow or stained with reddish or reddish-brown (middle photo).

Distribution in North Carolina: Although records are lacking from certain sections of the upper Piedmont and the Mountains, Eastern Painted Turtles probably occur in most of the state except on the Outer Banks, in the southern Coastal Plain and at high montane elevations (see map above).

Habitats and Habits: Eastern Painted Turtles are found in ponds, lakes, freshwater marshes and other bodies of still or slow-moving water with soft bottoms and often plentiful vegetation. They are among the most conspicuous of native basking turtles, and large numbers of them often can be seen sunning on partially submerged logs and similar objects, particularly in the spring and during the morning and afternoon in the summer. Some individuals may bask on warm, sunny days in the winter as well.



Dorsal view of an adult Spotted Turtle

Jeff Hall



Ventral view of an adult Spotted Turtle

John White,
Va. Herpetological Society



Hatchling Spotted Turtle

Jeff Hall

Spotted Turtle

Clemmys guttata



Average Adult Length: 4 to 5"

Identifying characteristics: The Spotted Turtle is a small turtle with a black carapace, usually speckled with round yellow spots (top photo), and a hingeless, yellowish-to-pinkish plastron with large brown-to-black patches (middle photo); shells of some old adults are uniformly dark. This turtle rarely exceeds a maximum carapace length of 4.5 inches; the maximum recorded length is 5.4 inches.

Distribution in North Carolina: Spotted Turtles range throughout most of eastern North Carolina (see map above) and are common locally in some places. An outlying record, as indicated by the question mark on the map, is based on a specimen collected from a small tributary of Rocky River in August 1968.

Habitats and Habits: Spotted Turtles live in marshes, wet pastures, drainage ditches, canals, woodland and floodplain pools, flooded borrow pits and small streams, especially where the water is clean and shallow, and the bottom is soft. Generally aquatic, Spotted Turtles often can be seen basking either singly or in small numbers with other basking turtles. When disturbed, they attempt to burrow in the mud or escape under logs. They are most active in the spring and are difficult to find in the summer.



Bog Turtle with prominent furrows on large carapacial scutes.

Jeff Hall



Old Bog Turtle with carapace worn smooth.

Jeff Beane



Juvenile Bog Turtle

Gabrielle Graeter

Special Regulations: The Bog Turtle is federally protected as threatened due to its similarity to the northern population of bog turtles. They cannot be collected or taken except under a special permit issued by the Wildlife Commission's Executive Director.

Bog Turtle

Clemmys muhlenbergii

Federally listed as threatened due to similarity of appearance



■ Bog Turtle Range

Average Adult Length: 3 to 4.5"

Identifying characteristics: The Bog Turtle is a semi-aquatic turtle, usually with a bright orange or yellow blotch on the side of its head (top photo). Its carapace is elongated, brown-to-black, often with a low median keel and concentric furrows or traces of them. It is one of the smallest turtles in the world, with an adult carapace length of 3.1-4.5 inches. Although the Bog Turtle typically has prominent furrows on the large carapacial scutes, some adults have carapaces that are worn nearly or entirely smooth, presumably from burrowing in the substrate and old age (middle photo).

Distribution in North Carolina: Bog Turtles have been recorded in the northern and southern mountains and in the western and west-central Piedmont (see map above), yet much remains to be learned about the distribution of these often rare turtles. Their distribution is probably more extensive than the map denotes.

Habitats and Habits: Throughout their range, Bog Turtles are associated closely with sphagnaceous bogs, marshy meadows and pastures and similar environments. Usually these places are characterized by small, shallow streams or trickles with soft bottoms and by various sedges and other aquatic and semiaquatic vegetation. Although Bog Turtles are accomplished burrowers and may remain buried for extended periods in the mud, they also commonly bask on tussocks of grass, clumps of moss and similar perches. The basking habit is most pronounced in the spring and early summer. Even in optimal habitats and during seemingly ideal conditions, often it is difficult to spot these secretive turtles.



Broad yellow stripe on forelegs

Eastern Chicken Turtle

Jeff Beane



Eastern Chicken Turtle

Jeff Hall



Eastern Chicken Turtle

Jeff Beane

Eastern Chicken Turtle

Deirochelys reticularia reticularia

state listed as a species of special concern



Eastern Chicken Turtle Range

Average Adult Length: 4 to 9"

Identifying characteristics: A small-to medium-sized turtle, the Eastern Chicken Turtle takes its name from its long neck which, when extended, is nearly as long as its carapace (bottom photo). The smooth, pear-shaped carapace is olive-to-dark brown. The “striped pants” on the rear legs and the broad yellow stripe on the forelegs are distinguishing characteristics of this turtle (top photo).

Distribution in North Carolina: Eastern Chicken Turtles are in decline. Once locally common in some areas of the Coastal Plain, they now are difficult to find in most sites. They have been recorded on the Outer Banks only from Nags Head Woods, Dare County (see map above).

Habitats and Habits: Eastern Chicken Turtles inhabit canals, marshes, borrow pits, cypress ponds and similar bodies of still or sluggish water. In the southeastern Coastal Plain, individuals occur in ponds surrounded by sandhills and pine flatwoods where other species of turtles often are scarce. Although usually aquatic, specimens have been found on roads or walking in wooded areas.

Special Regulations: The Eastern Chicken Turtle is listed as a species of special concern and cannot be collected or taken except under a special permit issued by the Wildlife Commission's Executive Director.

Diamondback Terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin

state listed as a species of special concern



■ Diamondback Terrapin Range

Average Adult Length: Females: 6 to 9”; males: 4 to 5.5”

Identifying characteristics: A small- to medium-sized coastal turtle, the Diamondback Terrapin has prominent concentric ridges and furrows on large carapacial scutes. Color patterns vary greatly — carapace can be greenish, gray, brown or blackish, sometimes with circular darker markings on large scutes. Dark markings are usually most conspicuous on head and neck (top photo). The Diamondback Terrapin’s eyes are black and large; its hindfeet are webbed prominently.

Distribution in North Carolina: Diamondback Terrapins probably are found on most of the Outer Banks, on many smaller islands and along a narrow strip of the coastal mainland from Virginia to South Carolina (see map above). They are common in a few places where damage to their habitats has been minimal, but populations in many areas have been and continue to be depleted by extensive coastal development and the alteration of marshes. Shallow-set crab pots frequently capture and kill these turtles.

Habitats and Habits: Diamondback Terrapins inhabit coastal marshes, bays, lagoons, creeks, mud flats and similar environments, characterized by salt or brackish waters. These turtles have been observed in tidal creeks and other bodies of water in the salt marshes on Ocracoke Island, and they have been found in similar habitats elsewhere on the Outer Banks. They are frequent baskers, often found sunbathing on mud flats and in other places near the water. They also often burrow in the mud, particularly during low tides and at night.



Diamondback Terrapin

Ken Taylor



Diamondback Terrapin

Andrew Grosse

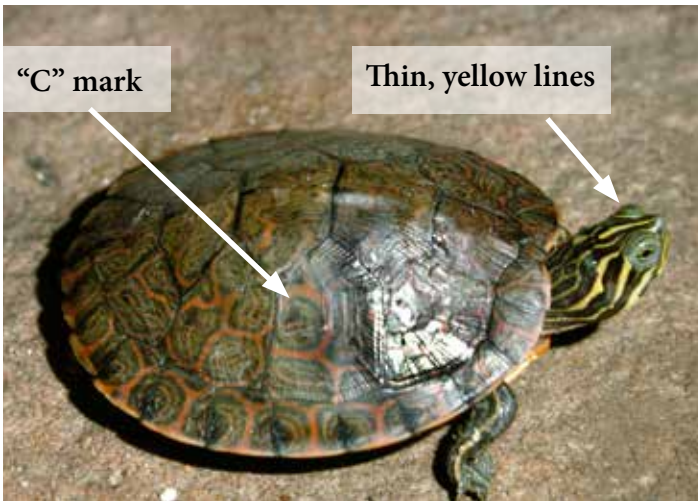


Juvenile Diamondback Terrapin

Jeff Hall

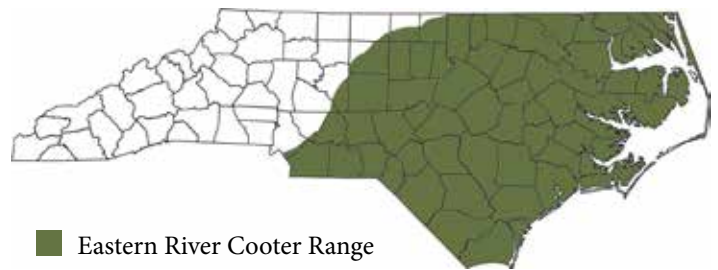
Special Regulations: Diamondback terrapins are state listed as a species of special concern and cannot be collected or taken except under a special permit issued by the Wildlife Commission’s Executive Director.

Eastern River Cooter *Pseudemys concinna*



Adult Eastern River Cooter

Alvin Braswell



■ Eastern River Cooter Range

Average Adult Length: 9 to 13”

Identifying characteristics: A large freshwater turtle, the Eastern River Cooter averages 9 to 12 inches in length. Its olive or brown-colored carapace is characterized by prominent patterns of concentric markings, a C-shaped figure or suggestion of one on second pleural scute (top photo). The carapace can be slightly flared at the back. River cooters usually have more than 11 thin, yellow stripes around the head (top photo). These markings usually fade with age. The plastron is yellow with a dark pattern that follows scute seams. This pattern usually fades with age. The upper jaw is notched in front and flanked by a cusp on each side.

Distribution in North Carolina: Most Eastern River Cooters are found in the Piedmont while most records of Eastern River Cooters in the Coastal Plain are from interior parts of the province (see map above).

Habitats and Habits: Most specimens known from the state were caught in basking traps in impoundments along rivers and large streams. Adult cooters have been observed basking on exposed rocks in rivers. Females in search of nesting sites have sometimes been discovered moving about on land, but usually not far from water.

NOTE: Florida Cooter (bottom photo), once thought to be a separate sub-species from the Eastern River Cooter, is now considered to be the same species as the River Cooter, and both species are combined in this guide as the same species “Eastern River Cooter.”



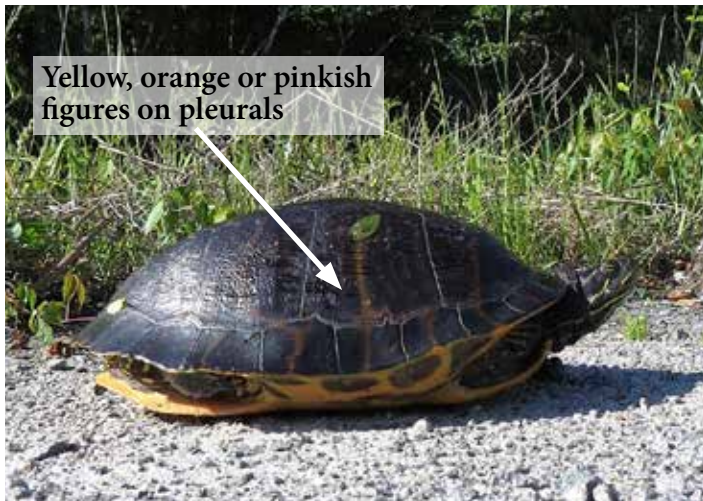
Eastern River Cooter Hatchling

Jeff Hall



Florida Cooter

Wikimedia



Adult Redbelly Turtle

Jeff Beane

Redbelly Turtle

Pseudemys rubriventris



■ Redbelly Turtle Range

Average Adult Length: 10 to 15¾"

Identifying characteristics: The Redbelly Turtle is a large freshwater turtle, typically between 10 and 15¾ inches long. The carapace is brown-to-black frequently with vertical or variously branching yellow, orange or pinkish figures on pleurals (top photo). The scutes are usually flattened or slightly concave. As its name signifies, the Redbelly Turtle has a plastron that is yellowish-orange to reddish, with or without dark markings (middle photo). Its head, neck, limbs and tail are usually black with yellow or greenish-yellow stripes (bottom photo).

Distribution in North Carolina: Redbelly Turtles are found most often in the northeastern Coastal Plain at least as far south as the Pamlico River-Sound area. They have been found also in Nags Head Woods in Dare County.

Habitats and Habits: Canals, streams, lakes and other bodies of still or sluggish water are characteristic habitats of Redbelly Turtles. Little is known about the habits of this turtle. Efforts to collect them in typical hoop-style turtle traps have been unsuccessful for the most part.



Adult Redbelly Turtle

Wikimedia



Adult Redbelly Turtle

Jeff Beane



Eastern Box Turtle

Jodie Owen

Eastern Box Turtle

Terrapene carolina carolina



Average Adult Length: Females: 8"; males: 6"

Identifying characteristics: The Eastern Box Turtle is perhaps the most identifiable of all North Carolina turtles with its high-domed, brown carapace variously marked with yellow or orange in adults and older juveniles (top photo). Its plastron is tan-to-dark brown and is hinged so that the turtle, when disturbed, can withdraw its head, limbs and tail and tightly close its shell (middle photo). Its upper jaw is beaklike (top photo).

Distribution in North Carolina: North Carolina's official state reptile, the Eastern Box Turtle is found statewide (see map above).

Habitats and Habits: Eastern Box Turtles are most common in and near wooded areas, particularly moist environments, but they also inhabit pastures, meadows and similar open, grassy places. Terrestrial and active during the day in the spring and early fall, Box Turtles especially are active after showers. Most activity in the summer occurs in the morning and afternoon.



Eastern Box Turtle Plastron

Jeff Hall



Eastern Box Turtle Hatchling

Jodie Owen



Adult Yellowbelly Slider

Jodie Owen



Yellowbelly Slider plastron stained red from water

Jodie Owen

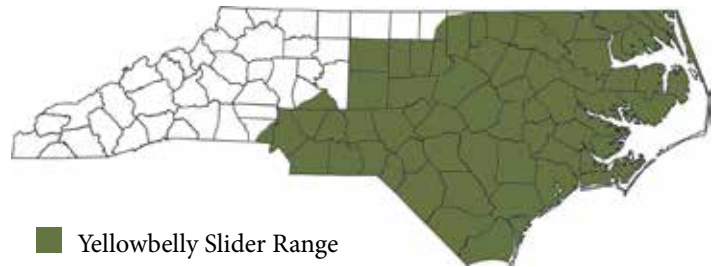


Juvenile Yellowbelly Slider

Jeff Hall

Yellowbelly Slider

Trachemys scripta scripta



Average Adult Length: Males: 7"; Females: 10"

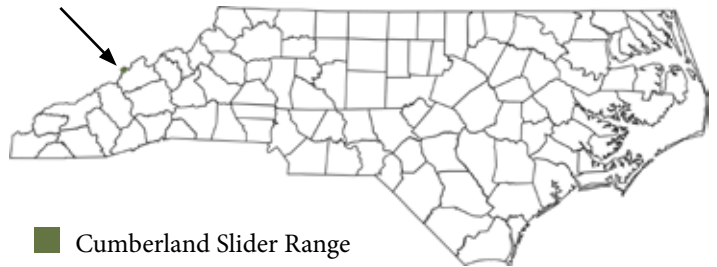
Identifying characteristics: The Yellowbelly Slider is a medium-sized or moderately large aquatic turtle with a usually conspicuous yellow blotch behind the eye, vertical yellow stripes on pleurals and rump and a narrow yellow stripe on lower foreleg (top photo). The carapace is olive-to-black in adults; considerably paler and more brightly marked in juveniles. The plastron typically is yellow although, in many instances, it is stained red-dish-brown or brown from the waters in which the turtle resides (middle photo).

Distribution in North Carolina: These usually common turtles occur in most of eastern North Carolina and in several places along the Outer Banks. They are also common in the eastern Piedmont. Records from farther inland are scattered mostly and the western range limit is uncertain (see map above).

Habitats and Habits: Lakes, ponds, canals and similar bodies of quiet or slow-moving water provide suitable habitats for sliders, and these turtles usually are common mostly in places having soft bottoms and abundant aquatic vegetation. Basking is common in sliders, and sometimes individuals can be seen sunning on floating logs or other debris. They are wary and will slide into and under the water at the slightest disturbance. Yellowbelly Sliders are sometimes found on land, usually when moving between aquatic habitats or on egg-laying forays.

Cumberland Slider *Trachemys scripta troosti*

state listed as a species of special concern



Cumberland Slider

Jeff Beane

Average Adult Length: Males: 7"; Females: 10"



Cumberland Slider plastron

Jeff Beane

Identifying characteristics: The Cumberland Slider is a subspecies of the Yellowbelly Slider. The carapace is typically olive brown with yellow markings (top photo). The plastron is hinged with brown markings (middle photo). The Cumberland Slider has a yellow bar behind each eye that can be wide or thin. Its front legs have large yellow stripes (bottom photo) while the back of the thighs have alternating black and yellow stripes.

Distribution in North Carolina: In North Carolina, Cumberland Sliders are found only in the French Broad River in Madison County at one site, approximately 1 to 3 river miles upstream from the Tennessee border (see map above). As of 2017, only six individuals have been documented in the state. While there are likely more Cumberland Sliders in the state, biologists do not believe there is a large population of Cumberland Sliders in North Carolina.

Habitats and Habits: Like the Yellowbelly Slider, Cumberland Sliders are basking turtles that prefer quiet, slow-moving water with muddy bottoms. They prefer ponds, lakes, streams with a lot of aquatic vegetation.

Special Regulations: Cumberland Sliders are state listed as a species of special concern and cannot be collected or taken except under a special permit issued by the Wildlife Commission's Executive Director.

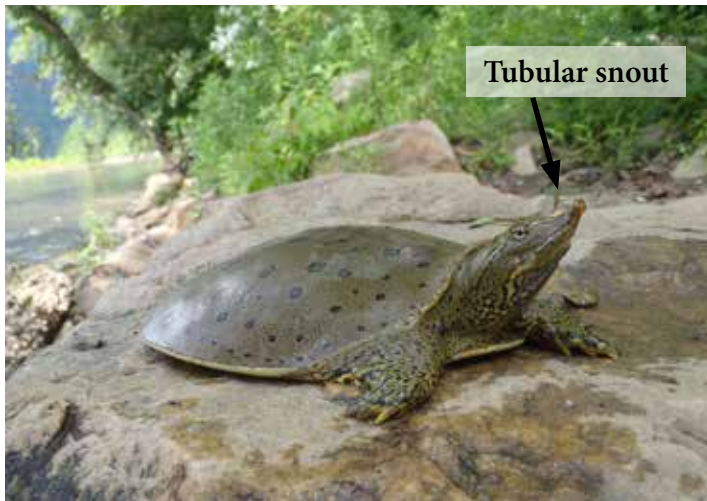


Cumberland Slider

Gabrielle Graeter

Identification of Species Trionychidae Family

Protected Species under SB 825



Eastern Spiny Softshell

Gabrielle Graeter

Eastern Spiny Softshell

Apalone spinifera spinifera

Subspecies: Gulf Coast Spiny Softshell - *Apalone spinifera aspera*

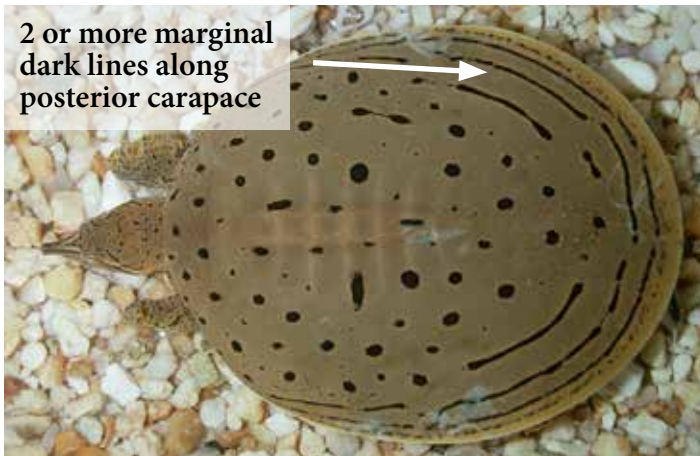
state listed as a species of special concern



■ Eastern Spiny Softshell Range

■ Gulf Coast Spiny Softshell Range

Average Adult Length: Females: 7 to 21"; Males: 5 to 9"



Gulf Coast Spiny Softshell

Alvin Braswell

Identifying characteristics: The Eastern Spiny Softshell (top photo) is a large, aquatic turtle having a flattened, leathery carapace with a single posterior marginal dark line or trace of one. Its carapace is scuteless, tan-to-olive with dark spots or blotches. Conical or spine-like protuberances occur along its anterior edge. Its plastron is hingeless, white or yellowish and usually patternless. It has a tubular snout. The Gulf Coast Spiny Softshell is a subspecies of *A. spinifera* and differs from the nominate race by having usually two or more marginal dark lines or traces of them on the posterior carapace (middle photo).



Eastern Spiny Softshell

Jeff Hall

Distribution in North Carolina: Eastern Spiny Softshells are found only along the French Broad River system, although biologists expect they could be found in some other mountain regions, particularly in the larger streams of the Tennessee River drainage. Gulf Coast Spiny Softshells are found mainly in the Pee Dee and Santee River drainages, primarily in the Catawba, Pee Dee, Yadkin, Broad and Lumber rivers (see map above).

Habitats and Habits: Highly aquatic, softshells in North Carolina probably occur chiefly in medium-sized-to-large streams and lakes having at least some areas with sand or mud bottoms. They are frequent baskers and are found on partly submerged logs and stumps and on mud flats, sandbars and exposed beaches. Individuals sometimes burrow in mud and sand bottoms, often in shallow water where they can extend their long necks and permit the nostrils to break the surface for air.

Special Regulations: Spiny Softshells are state listed as a species of special concern and cannot be collected or taken except under a special permit issued by the Wildlife Commission's Executive Director.