

Reptiles, Turtles & Snakes

What is a reptile? Reptiles are cold-blooded vertebrates that have scales covering their body. "Cold blooded" means that these creatures depend on their environment to regulate their body temperature. A reptile will bask—or lie—in the sun to get warm and when it is time to cool down it will go into the water or find some shade. Do you see any spots nearby that a reptile might use to warm itself?

Here along the Lamprey River we have many native species of reptiles including six turtles and ten snakes. Common turtles and snakes include the following:

The painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) is the state's most common turtle; it can grow to be 4-6 inches long and can be identified by the red pattern along the edge of its shell and the red and yellow stripes along its neck.



Credit: Dreamstime

The musk turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*) is common but difficult to see, as it is frequently underwater. This species grows to be 4-5 inches long with a brown or black dome shaped shell that is often covered in algae. It gets its name from the smelly odor it can release when frightened.



Credit: Dreamstime

The snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) is the state's largest turtle and can grow to be 8-14 inches long. Easily identified by its jagged exterior this turtle has a reduced lower shell, which means that it cannot pull its head underneath its shell as many other turtles do. As a result, if this turtle feels threatened it will snap at attackers with its very strong jaws.



Credit: NH Fish and Game

The garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) is one of the state's most common snakes and can grow to be 18-26 inches long. This snake is not poisonous and can be identified by its light yellow chin and belly and dark colored body with 2-3 lighter stripes (generally yellow) running down the sides.



Credit: Dreamstime

The brown snake (*Storeria dekayi*) as the name suggests is a small snake with a brown body and two rows of dark spots running parallel down its back with a stripe of lighter brown between the rows. This snake only grows to be 10-14 inches long and is not poisonous.



Credit: NH Fish and Game

The water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*) is a large snake that tends to inhabit aquatic habitats. This species is not poisonous and has a dark brown/grey body with brown or black bands and red crescent shapes along its belly. This snake can grow to be 24-40 inches long.



Credit: Dreamstime