



CARE SHEET

North American Spotted Turtle *Clemmys guttata*

The North American Spotted Turtle *clemmys guttata* is a small species of turtle native to southern Canada, and the eastern states of the USA. They have a black carapace and, as babies, generally have one yellow or orange spot per scute. As they grow more spots emerge, sometimes as many as 100. The plastron can be orange, yellow or red with black blotches. The females have brightly coloured red, orange or yellow neck and leg patterning, the males are less brightly coloured. This species of turtle normally reaches around 4.5 inches, but some grow up to 5.5 inches. The measurement is the carapace length (back shell) as measured in a straight line (not curved over the apex of the carapace).



Housing



Clemmys guttata are an aquatic species of turtle, but they are not strong swimmers like Sliders and Cooters. Although they can swim, they also like to be able to climb/walk on items. In a captive habitat they should be provided with water only around 3 to 6 inches deep. Land area should take up around 50 percent of the enclosure with lots of plants and bog wood etc. in the water. The recommended enclosure size is at least a floor plan of 4 x their length x 2 length. An adult therefore, could easily need a tank 24 x 12 x 12 inches for one animal.

A basking area is required so that the animals can rest and dry off completely. They also use this area to regulate their temperature and UV light absorption. A basking area can be a floating item like bark, or a commercially purchased turtle ramp, equally it can be fixed such as a log or rocks. I prefer to build an above tank basking area which is fixed with a ramp. This prevents movement or sinking and means I can regulate the basking spot in terms of lighting and heat.

Real or fake plants should be provided to allow the animals to exhibit natural hiding or resting behaviour. Note they will try to eat the plants, so plastic plants should be sturdy.

Many keepers like to provide a substrate on the bottom of the tank. Substrate is not required and a tank without it will stay cleaner more easily. Gravel SHOULD NOT be used as the turtles often swallow it in search of food and are unable to pass it, resulting in gut impaction which can be fatal. I recommend play sand marketed for children's sand pits. This will allow natural foraging behaviour and purchase on the bottom of the tank. Make sure it is very well rinsed beforehand to remove all dust and fine particles.

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Written by Dudley Pinson ©The Turtle Emporium 2020

Heat and light

Water temperature should be in the range of 23-29°C.

UVB and UVA (heat) are both required to maintain correct internal temperatures and synthesis of vitamin D3 and calcium. UVB can be achieved using screw in bulb type UVB lamps or the longer T8 tubes. A UVB of 5% (5.0) – to 10% (10.0) should be provide. Replace UVB bulbs at least every 12 months. A ceramic heat emitter or normal basking bulb can provide UVA and heat. Wattage depends on distance from basking area. The basking area should be 27- 30°C under the heat lamp. Avoid coloured bulbs and use only those closest to the natural spectrum. The lights should be set to a timer to provide 10-12 hours of light per day during natural hours.

Do not allow the water or enclosure to get too hot as this can trigger aestivation, where the turtles become dormant in a summer sleep similar to hibernation.



Filtration

Turtles are dirty animals and leave a lot of waste by leftover food and faecal matter. They need filtration 3 x more powerful than what is recommended for fish in the same volume water. All commercially purchased filters will have a rating based on fish, so make sure you bear this in mind. Young *c. guttata* lack the strength to swim in a strong current, so a weaker flow should be used at this age. Adults will need a decent sized external canister filter.

Diet

Clemmys guttata are mainly carnivorous. They prefer prey animals and in captivity their main part of their diet will consist of commercially available pellets, bloodworm, earthworms, crickets and similar. This can be supplemented with red and green lettuce (not spinach or iceberg). Variation is key and a piece of cuttlebone should be provided at all times for calcium and to keep the beak trim.

This guide is meant to be a quick reference/starter guide and does not replace more in-depth research on this species. Always ensure that you know the correct care needs for your animal.

