



## CARE SHEET

### European Pond Turtle *Emys orbicularis*

The European Pond Turtle *emys orbicularis* is a smallish species of turtle native to southern Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East. There are multiple subspecies which are very difficult to distinguish between without genetic testing. The different subspecies tend to be endemic to a particular area and can differ in size from each other. A large female of certain subspecies could reach up to 9 inches, but this is rare and most are less than 8 inches, with the males significantly smaller than the females. The measurement is the carapace length (back shell) as measured in a straight line (not curved over the apex of the carapace).



The carapace and skin are normally black or very dark brown with yellow spots or dashes on the scutes and skin. The plastron is usually yellow with a black blotch in the middle of varying size. The eyes can be yellow, bright orange or brown.

### Housing



*Emys orbicularis* are an aquatic species of turtle, but they are not as strong a swimmer as their American Slider and Cooter cousins. 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 at least twice the depth that they are long and with a floor plan 4 x their length x 2 length. An adult therefore, could easily need water 48 x 12 x 12 inches as a minimum.

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 for young animals should be in the range of 25-27°C. This can be reduced to 20-22°C for adults.

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 35-40°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.

## 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 *emys* 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

*Emys orbicularis* are an omnivorous species, eating plant and prey matter. They prefer prey animals and in captivity their main part of their diet will consist of commercially available pellets. This should be supplemented with red and green lettuce (not spinach or iceberg). They also enjoy bloodworms when small. 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.



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