



## CARE SHEET

### Map Turtles *Graptemys*



Map Turtles, sometimes known as Sawback Turtles, are a large species of turtle native to the United States of America. There are around 15 subspecies, in the pet trade the False Map is most commonly seen (*G. pseudographica*) followed by the Mississippi (*G. khoni*) and Oachita Maps (*G. oachitensis*) less common are the Black-Knob (*G. nigrinoda*) and the stunning Yellow-Blotched Maps (*G. flavimaculata*). All species are green with highly intricate lines similar to the contour lines on an Ordnance Survey map. There is minor variation on head patterns and eyes, but most striking variation on the carapace between subspecies. Generally males grow to around 6 inches and females anything up to 11 inches.

### Housing

*Graptemy*s are an aquatic species of turtle and very strong swimmers pretty much straight from birth. In a captive habitat they should be provided with water at least four times the depth that they are long and with a floor plan 4 x their length x 2 depth. An adult, therefore, could easily need water 48 x 20 x 20 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 provided. 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. It is especially important to provide this species with clean, strong flowing water as they are river animals. 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 *graptemys* lack the strength to swim in a strong current, so a weaker flow should be used at this age. Adults will need a large sized external canister filter.

## Diet

*Graptemyis* are a carnivorous species, in the wild they specialise in molluscs and crustaceans, crushing them in their strong jaws. In captivity their diet should consist of commercially available pellets, mussels, shell on prawns and other seafood. Red and green lettuce, escarole, water cress (but NEVER spinach or iceberg) can be offered to supplement their diet. 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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