

From the DPPHOA Environmental Committee:



Point Outlook: Snapping Turtles: Our Amazing Neighbors in Nature

Snapping turtles are among the oldest reptiles in North America, with ancestors that lived alongside dinosaurs millions of years ago. These remarkable animals can live 30–50 years or more and play an important role in keeping ponds, lakes, rivers, and wetlands healthy. As nature's clean-up crew, they eat fish, insects, frogs, aquatic plants, and even dead animals, helping to keep waterways clean and balanced.

Despite their fierce reputation, snapping turtles are usually shy and prefer to avoid people. In the water, they almost always swim away when given the chance. On land, however, they cannot hide as easily, so they may hiss, lunge, or snap if they feel threatened. This is simply a way to protect themselves—not because they want to attack.

During late spring and early summer, female snapping turtles leave the water to lay their eggs. They may be seen crossing roads, fields, trails, or even schoolyards in search of a sunny nesting spot. If you see one, the best thing to do is admire it from a safe distance and allow it to continue its journey.

If a snapping turtle is crossing a road and it is safe for an adult to help, the turtle should always be moved in the direction it was already traveling. Never turn it around, or it will simply try to cross again.

One important rule is never pick up a snapping turtle by its tail. Doing so can seriously injure or even break its spine. Snapping turtles also have surprisingly long necks and can reach much farther than many people expect, delivering a powerful bite if frightened.

If a turtle truly needs assistance, an adult should use a shovel, sturdy board, or another flat object to gently guide or slide it across the road. Large turtles should only be handled by trained wildlife professionals or experienced adults.

If you discover a snapping turtle:

Watch quietly from a respectful distance.

Never touch, chase, or feed it.

Tell an adult where it is—and remind them not to pick it up by the tail.

Give the turtle plenty of space to continue its journey.

By respecting wildlife and giving snapping turtles the space they need, we help protect these incredible animals that have been part of our natural world for millions of years.