

11 Types of Pet Turtles: Best Turtles to Have as Pets

In this article, I am going to talk about the types of pet turtles that you can own easily. All these turtles are ideal for having as pets, only if you are committed enough to take care of them. **So, if you are interested to know about the best turtles to have as pets, read the article till the end.**

Though there are hundreds of types of turtles in nature, not all of them are ideal for having as pets. However, the number of turtles that can be kept as a pet is not low either. There is a huge list of turtles that can be kept as pet. With such a huge list, a beginner can easily get confused on what species of turtle to go for. That's why in this article, **I am going to list out my favorite types of pet turtles along with their personalities, preferable environments and ideal habitat.**

Best Turtles to Have as Pets:

Here is a list of my 12 favorite types of turtles to have as pets:

1. Red Eared Slider:

The Red eared slider got its name from its famous patch of red color behind each eyes. It is one of the most common types of pet turtles available in the USA. They are generally available in all over the world. However, you can mostly find them in the Gulf of Mexico to Texas. Red eared sliders are a strong swimmer. They love slow moving waters such as ponds, marshes etc. If you want a pet turtle that can live as much long as a human, red eared slider can be a smart choice as they can live for up to 50 to 70 years.

Size and Appearance:

Red eared sliders can grow up to a pretty big size. Adult red ear sliders can be about 12 inches in diameter. The overall body color of this turtle is greenish with a bright red patch behind each eyes. Red eared sliders are aquatic turtles. So, they must need an aquarium with water.

Preferable Habitat:

The preferable aquarium size for a red eared slider is at least 30 to 50 gallons. Measure your turtle's body length and multiply it by 2. This should be the required area of water in the aquarium. Turtles are generally very dirty animal. So, the aquarium must have a very efficient filtration system. The ideal temperature for red eared sliders are 75 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit. There must be a basking area for the turtle in the aquarium. The basking area should have a temperature about 88 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

Feeding:

You can provide red eared sliders with a [commercial food](#). However, the diet shouldn't only consist of commercial foods. You should add green vegetables and fresh fruits with it. This ensures that your red ear slider is getting a balanced nutrition.

Hibernation:

According to the [Nature Mapping Foundation](#), the red eared sliders start to get inactive from October. Sometimes they may hibernate under water. Generally, red eared sliders start to hibernate if the temperature gets below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

2. Painted Turtle:

It is one of the most widespread turtle species in North America. They are also available in Northern Mexico to Southern Canada. The painted turtle gets its name from its appearance. It looks as though an artist has painted on it.

Size and Appearance:

When adult, the painted turtle can get about 10 inches in length. They generally live for 25 years. If you look at a painted turtle, you may think an artist has painted on it. They have bright colorful yellow, green and red colors.

Painted turtles are generally found in marshes, ponds and other water's edges. They are aquatic turtle, so they love to swim in the water. However, they bask in the sun too.

Ideal Habitat:

Painted turtles do not need as large environment as red eared sliders. As they are aquatic turtles, they spend most of the time swimming in the water. However, you do need to provide a good basking place. The ideal temperature range for them is about 60 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Painted turtles must have access to full spectrum lighting for at least 10 to 12 hours a day.

Feeding:

You can feed them any well-known [turtle commercial food](#). It is better to add feeder fish and diced up chickens in their diet for added protein. You should also supplement green vegetables to the diet for providing a balanced nutrition.

Hibernation:

Like red eared sliders, painted turtles start to get inactive in around October. They generally go to hibernation if the temperature falls below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

3. Box Turtles:

A box turtle has a unique appearance than most other aquatic turtles. Their feet are not completely webbed like other aquatic turtles. They also have a shell shaped like high dome.

These turtles are called box turtles because, unlike most other turtles, they can completely hide inside their shell, much like a box. Box turtles have a hinged belly which can close very tightly. Even an ant can't get inside the box turtle if it closes up. It is thought that box turtles evolved this ability in order to protect themselves from other predators in the nature. One of the most common species of box turtles in the USA is Eastern Box Turtle.

For keeping a pet box turtle, you should only get one that has been bred and raised in captivity. With proper care, a box turtle can be a lifetime pet for you.

Size and Appearance:

When fully grown box turtles can get up to 6 inches in length. According to [Missouri Department of Conservation](#), box turtles can live up to 80 years. Box turtles do not have fully webbed feet. They have a high domed like shell which is not common in most other turtle species.

Ideal Habitat:

Unlike most other turtles, box turtles are mainly land-dwelling. They don't need an aquatic environment to grow. However, you do need to provide them a small pool for wading. You can setup a box turtle habitat either in indoor or outdoor.

I prefer outdoor setups to indoor setups because outdoor setups can be way larger than indoor ones. However, if you live in a place where the temperature gets very rough, it is not recommended to go for an outdoor setup. You can either setup the habitat in a glass aquarium or in a plastic tub.

Box turtles prefer a temperature that is greater than 60 degrees Fahrenheit. If it gets really cold at night, you should place a dome or heated stone inside to provide warmth. You can place sand, potting soil, leaf and some sphagnum moss on the floor of the cage. To keep a constant humidity level, spray water on the substrate every day. It is extremely important to keep a humid environment inside the cage because box turtles can suffer from respiratory problems and dry eyes if the environment is dry.

You should also place some turtle hideouts in the cage and something for it to burrow.

Feeding:

Box turtles defecate in their water. So, you need to provide fresh and clean water every day. As box turtles are omnivorous, they enjoy a variety of diet. You can make up their daily diets with vegetables, insects, [worms](#) as well as fresh fruits. You should keep the food in a separate bowl to keep the cage clean. However, to stimulate natural environment, you can put the food on a flat rock.

Hibernation:

Box turtle burrow into the substrate to hibernate in the wild. However, in captivity, they may skip hibernation if they receive 13 to 14 hours of light each day. If you observe that your pet box turtle is burrowing inside the substrate for hibernation, keep the habitat in a place where the temperature is between 45 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. They may hibernate till Spring.

4. Mississippi Map Turtles

The Mississippi map turtle got its name because of the map-like paintings on its shell. It is found in the Mississippi valley, that's why it is called Mississippi map turtles. They are mostly found in rivers, streams, and lakes. Unlike most other aquatic turtles, Mississippi map turtles like to be in moving water rather than ponds.

Map turtles prefer large water body with current such as rivers. They are not very demanding as pets, but needs excellent water quality.

Appearance and Size:

Mississippi turtles are also known as "Sawback" turtles as they have a saw-like structure on the top of their shell. They have map like markings on their shell, thus they got the name "Map Turtles".

Mississippi map turtles are considered to be a medium sized turtle at adult stage. Females get larger than males and are more dominant. Females can get about 6 to 10 inches in length when they are adult. On the contrary, males get only about 3.5 to 5 inches in length.

If kept properly, a Mississippi map turtle can live up to 30 years in captivity.

Ideal Habitat:

Mississippi map turtles are one of the most elegant species of pet turtles. However, they require a little bit more attention than other aquatic turtles as they are very skittish and can get nervous easily.

The most important thing for keeping Mississippi map turtles is pristine water. They also need a considerably large enclosure. They also prefer a flowing water body. I recommend Mississippi map turtles only to experienced turtle keepers. You should always get one from a trusted breeder.

Feeding:

As Mississippi map turtles are aquatic, they do almost everything while swimming, even eating. Even, they only eat in water. Map turtles are omnivorous, so they eat a mix of vegetables and protein. However, feeding them too much protein can result in unnatural growth.

You can feed them a reliable commercial turtle food daily. However, the diet should also consist of green leafy vegetables. Their favorite vegetables are spinach, dandelion leaves, lettuce and parsley. Fruits are a great treat for Mississippi map turtles.

Hibernation:

Mississippi map turtles tend to go to hibernation if the temperature drops below 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

5. Wood Turtle:

The wood turtle got its name because of its sculpted shell which has brown and tan shades. The legs appear in yellow and red color. They are mostly found in Mexico and Costa Rica. There are four main sub species of wood turtles, however ornate wood turtle is the most common one as a pet.

Appearance and Size:

Wood turtles can get up to 9 inches in diameter. Males tend to be larger in size than females. Wood turtles have a distinctive brown and tan shades on their shell. Their shell also has a sculpted structure. The legs mainly appear in yellow and red color.

Ideal Habitat:

You can keep wood turtle both in an indoor enclosure as well as outdoor enclosure. The minimum length of indoor enclosure should be 84 inches. You should place thick substrate on the floor so that the turtle can burrow if it wishes. Also place a tub full of water. It is a good idea to mix the substrate with cypress mulch. It is also recommended to add some plants in the enclosure for a more natural environment. You should also put some large river rocks in the cage for the turtle to lounge.

Outdoor enclosure should have similar features to the indoor enclosure, however it needs ample shade in one part of the enclosure. Always make sure that the water tub is not too deep as wood turtles may get drowned.

Feeding:

Wood turtles prefer meat rich diet. It is a good idea to feed them cat food. However, also provide them green leafy vegetables 2 to 3 days a week. You can also add some fruits to the diet such as bananas, strawberries etc.

Hibernation:

Wood turtles may get into hibernation during the winter season.

6. African Aquatic Sideneck Turtle:

African Aquatic Sideneck Turtles have originally come from the southern and eastern Africa. They are getting more famous as pets as these turtles tend to be more active during the day time. Moreover, Sideneck turtles are easily available as they are not an endangered species.

Here is an interesting fact about Sideneck turtles. Unlike most other turtles, they can't fully hide their heads inside the shell. Instead of that, they take their heads to the side and fold them below the shell. That's why they are called Sideneck turtles.

Size and Appearance:

African Aquatic Sideneck turtles can grow from 8 to 18 inches long when they are fully adult. With proper care, a Sideneck turtle can live up to 25 years.

African aquatic Sideneck turtles are generally dark in color. Their belly has a darkish grey color with underdeveloped yellow region. The head has either a brown or olive oil color with dark markings. The feet are not completely webbed. They have sharp claws too.

Many turtle owners regard African aquatic Sideneck turtle as a cute pet. It is because their mouth always resembles a smiling face.

Ideal Habitat:

You can keep an African aquatic Sideneck turtle either inside or outside. A Sideneck turtle habitat must have a considerable large tank, a basking area, proper lighting setup, heating and lastly balanced food. You can either use an aquarium glass tank or plastic tub. A single African Sideneck turtle will do well in a 40-gallon tank.

Keep the water level at least 1.5 times the length of the Sideneck turtle. I prefer a depth of 6 to 8 inches of water. Always keep a dry basking are for the turtle where it can dry off completely. It is extremely important for the healthy growth of aquatic turtles. For keeping the water crystal clean, get a large powerful filtration system.

Feeding:

African aquatic Sideneck turtles are omnivorous. Always feed your Sideneck turtle a variety of diet, no matter how your turtle loves a single a type of food. Giving varieties of food will ensure that your turtle doesn't form a fixation.

Young Sideneck turtle's diet should mainly consist of protein such as insects and worms. As they get older, add more green leafy vegetables to the diet. You can give your Sideneck turtle a reliable commercial food daily. However, mix other items with it such as fish, cooked chicken, beef heart, snails, dandelions, collard greens etc.

Hibernation:

Unlike most other aquatic turtle species, African aquatic Sideneck turtles do not hibernate on a seasonal basis. So, you should only keep them in an outside habitat if the temperature is favorable.

7. Caspian Pond Turtle:

Originating from the Middle East, a Caspian pond turtle is easily recognized by its olive or tan color with cream or yellow color markings on the top. The markings also appear on the head, legs and shell. One interesting fact about the Caspian pond turtles is, they can recognize their owner with time.

Size and Appearance:

Caspian pond turtles can get about 7 to 10 inches in length when they are fully adult. With proper care, a Caspian pond turtle can live for up to 40 years.

These turtles have a smooth oval shaped shell with olive or tan color. There are also distinguishable yellow or cream markings all over the shell, head and legs.

Ideal Habitat:

A Caspian pond turtle needs at least a 75-gallon tank. It is better to keep them in a plastic tub or outdoor pond rather than in a glass aquarium. For each extra turtle, you need to have at least 40-gallon extra space in the tank. These turtles don't need any substrate. A bare bottom tank is fine. However, the habitat must include a basking area where the turtle can completely dry itself off.

It is also very important to keep a powerful large filter for keeping a pristine water quality.

Feeding:

The young Caspian pond turtles are carnivorous. However, with more age, they start to become omnivorous. You can provide them a reliable commercial food daily with some green leafy vegetables, insects, worms as well as chopped fishes.

Hibernation:

Caspian pond turtles generally hibernate during the winter.

8. Reeve's Turtle:

Reeve's turtle is a popular species of pet turtle that is widely imported to the USA mainly from Japan and China. This turtle can get about 6 inches in diameter and they can live for up to 20 to 25 years. Unlike most other aquatic turtles, Reeve's turtle likes to get stroked and handled, so it can be a great choice as a first pet turtle. They are also known as Chinese Pond Turtle.

Size and Appearance:

When fully adult, Reeve's turtle can get to about 6 inches in diameter. There are three distinguishable keels from the front to back. The shell has a color range from black to tan. There are also incomplete yellow lines on the heads and necks of these turtles.

Ideal Habitat:

Reeve's turtles are not the best swimmers, so they need a habitat with shallow water depth. It is safe to provide a water level three times the length of the turtle. The habitat must include a basking area where the turtle can completely dry itself off. There should also be a UVB light and heating light in the habitat. It is better to provide some hiding places in the tank so the turtle can feel safe.

A single baby reeve's turtle will need at least a 15-gallon tank with 5 gallons of water volume. The larger tank you can get, the better.

Feeding:

Reeve's turtles are omnivorous, so they happily accept both meat and vegetables. You can provide them a good commercial turtle food daily. However, you do need to add some green leafy vegetables for extra minerals and vitamin. Worms, insects, fishes, chopped chicken etc. can be offered with the vegetables as a good protein source.

Hibernation:

Reeve's turtle has a similar hibernation pattern to the red eared sliders.

9. Cooter Turtle:

Cooter turtles are hard-shelled aquatic turtles mainly found in the eastern and southern USA. There are mainly three sub species of Cooter turtles: Pond Cooter Turtle, River Cooter Turtle, and Red bellied Cooter Turtle.

You can either keep a Cooter turtle in an aquarium or in an outside pond. The water must be kept clean. Cooter turtles can get very large, some females can get up to 16 inches in length. Like other aquatic turtles, Cooter turtles need a place for basking as well as proper lighting in indoor setup.

They are omnivorous. So, you can feed them a mix of meat and vegetables with of course a reliable commercial food.

10. Razor-backed Musk Turtle:

Razor-backed musk turtle is the largest type of musk turtle. They are completely aquatic. however they may come out some time out of the water to bask.

These turtles have a large head along with a comparatively long neck. You can easily identify a razor backed musk turtle with their sharp beak. The legs are short. They have a large keel which goes through all the length of the shell.

Their body have a cream or tan color with brown markings on the body and shell. As they spend most of their time in the water, they need a habitat with large volume of water. Razor backed turtles should be able to completely submerge, swim and walk along the bottom of the aquarium. One turtle needs about 30-gallon space in the enclosure.

Though razor backed turtles do not bask frequently like other aquatic turtles, you do need to provide a basking place with proper light and heat setup.

You can feed them a good turtle commercial food on a regular basis. However, I always recommend to add some extra insects, worms, crickets, snails etc. with the pellets for extra protein.

11. Softshell turtles:

Softshell turtles are named because of their soft smooth shells. Some pet softshell turtles can get about 14 inches long.

The habitat for softshell turtles depend on which type of softshell turtle you choose. Some of the species can get more than 2 feet long. I don't recommend having them as pets. Smooth and spiny softshell turtles are more popular as pet.

Softshell turtles need at least a 75-gallon tank. The larger you can get, the better. The water quality must be kept crystal clear all the time. As softshell turtles are much more vulnerable than other species of aquatic turtles, you mustn't keep any item in the tank that may wound them.

I always recommend a powerful filtration system for softshell turtles such as canister filters.

Softshell turtles prefer a clean smooth sand bottom as it replicates their natural environment. Sand is also a safer option than gravels. You should also provide a basking place for the turtle to completely dry itself off.

Soft shell turtles are primarily carnivorous. They enjoy a good pelleted commercial food in captivity. You should also spice up the diet with some insects, worms, snails, fishes etc. Always place the food in the water.

So, here is my detailed guide on types of pet turtles that you can have. There are some other species of turtles which are much rare and exotic. Also, all of these species mention in the article are not legal to have as pets in all the states of America. So, you should always check the state law before getting a pet turtle.

Let me know which types of pet turtles you have in the comment section below!