Pennsylvania
Fish and Boat Commission

Commercial Snapping Turtle Permit Terms and Conditions

1. Permittee shall abide by current Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission laws and regulations regarding reptiles and amphibians.
2. Permittee must possess a current Pennsylvania resident or non-resident fishing license while hunting snapping turtles.
3. The permit must be in the possession of the permittee at all times while hunting snapping turtles.
4. Permittee must comply with the season and the daily and possession limits for snapping turtles (daily limit=15, possession limit=30).
5. Permittee must complete an annual harvest report for all turtles harvested online at HuntFish.PA.gov or send by mail on the form prescribed by the Commission to the following address postmarked by DECEMBER 1ST of the permit year:

   Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
   Division of Environmental Services
   Natural Diversity Section
   595 E. Rolling Ridge Dr
   Bellefonte, PA 16823
6. Even if the permittee does not hunt, take, catch or kill any common snapping turtles during the permit year, the permittee must file a report. THE COMMISSION MAY DENY PERMITS FOR FUTURE YEARS, IF THE COMMISSION DOES NOT RECEIVE A REPORT BY THE DECEMBER 1st DEADLINE.

Length and Weight Measurements, Sex Determination

The conditions of this permit require all permittees to provide an annual report of common snapping turtles seen or captured and to provide biological and location data. The total length (carapace and plastron), weight, and sex measurements are requested for snapping turtles that are actually handled/harvested.

When taking these measurements on a live snapping turtle, please use the necessary precautions to prevent harming yourself or the snapping turtle. Please do not pick up a large snapping turtle by its tail, because it can cause damage to the turtle's vertebrae and if done incorrectly, the turtle can be in a position to bite you. It is recommended that you use a 3½ - 4 inch diameter PVC pipe that is greater than 20 inches in length to cover the head of the snapping turtle. The PVC pipe will prevent the snapping turtle from biting you and will allow you to safely handle the turtle while taking the measurements.

Procedure for Length (carapace and plastron) Measurements:

All length measurements should be taken in inches (in). To obtain the carapace (top of the shell) length, use a flexible tape to measure from the nuchal (the scute directly behind the turtle's head) to the base of notch where the two most posterior scutes meet (See Figure 1). For the plastron (bottom of the shell), measure along the centerline of the plastron.

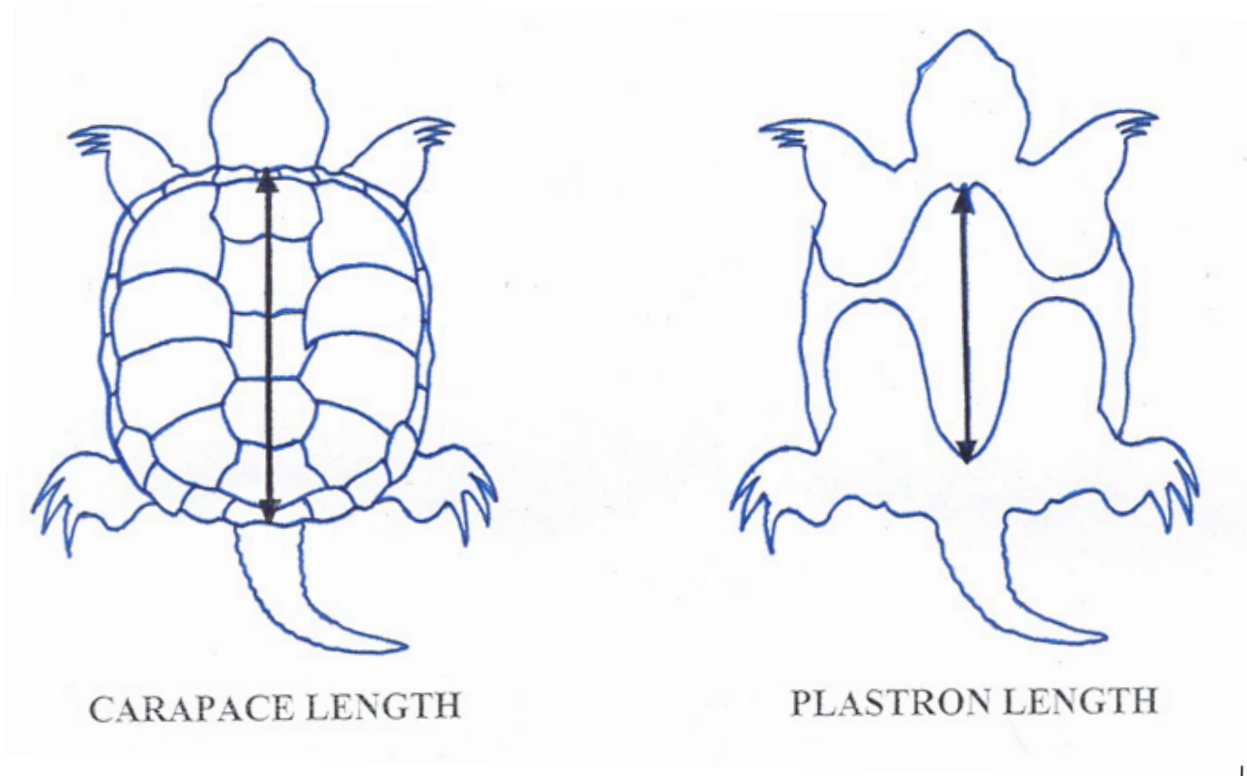


Figure 1 Illustration of where to measure the carapace and plastron length of snapping turtles

Weight:

The weight of the turtle should be recorded in pounds (lbs). If the turtle is alive when you weigh it, place the turtle in large pillowcase and using a spring scale, a digital scale, or a non-digital scale record the weight of the turtle.

Procedure for Sex determination:

Juveniles: Typically, if the carapace length of the snapping turtle is less than 10 inches then the turtle is considered a juvenile.

Males and Females: Males grow much longer than females. The easiest way to determine the sex of a snapping turtle is to determine the placement of the cloacal opening. The cloacal opening is an opening on the turtle's tail where their intestinal, genital, and urinary

tracts are located. To do this, flip the turtle over on its back so its plastron is facing towards the sky. Grasp the tail and stretch it out so the tail is straight. Males will have their cloacal opening even or past the edge of their carapace. Females will have their cloacal opening towards the base of their tail, below the edge of the carapace. Another way to determine sex in turtles is to look at the shape of the plastron. Males have concave plastrons (cup shaped) compared to females who have flat plastrons.

Procedure to determine if female is gravid/non-gravid:

If the turtle is identified as a female, you will need to determine if she is gravid (with eggs). Flip the turtle over on its back and extend one of her hind legs out as far as you can. Using your freehand, place your index finger where the leg comes out and rotate your finger towards the carapace and the center of the turtle's body. If she is gravid, you will be able to feel the round eggs within her.