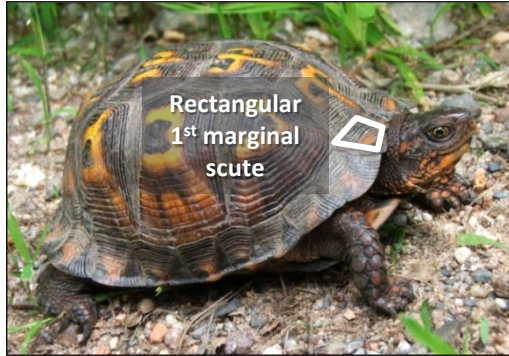


Identification Guide to Eastern Box Turtles

There are two regional groups of box turtles in the United States (eastern and western).

The **Eastern Group** has

- Highly variable shell pattern
- Keeled carapace
- Rectangular 1st marginal scute
- Short interfemoral seam
- Carapace is higher toward rear
- All hind toes are similar



Range of box turtles in the United States. The Carolina (eastern) group (colored in orange, yellow, green, and periwinkle) lives in the east and the Ornate (western) group (purple and blue) lives in the west. The grey shaded area in the middle is where their ranges overlap.

[Map based on the Davidson College Herpetology Lab Box Turtle Webpage. www.bio.davidson.edu/people/midorcas/research/Contribute/box%20turtle/boxmain.htm]

Four subspecies comprise the Eastern Group:

Three toed box turtle (*Terrapene carolina triunguis*) has a tan/olive shell with yellow/orange spots on head and limbs and three toes on each hind foot. Males can have red heads. It ranges throughout central U.S. (green on map above).



Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) has a black/brown carapace with irregularly shaped blotches of yellow/orange. It has four toes on each hind foot and ranges throughout the eastern U.S. from Georgia to Maine and west to Illinois (orange on map above).



Gulf coast box turtle (*Terrapene carolina major*) is the largest of the extant box turtles and is semiaquatic. It has a dark carapace, flared marginal scutes, and four toes on each hind foot. Its head color ranges from dark to white in older males. It occurs along the Gulf coast from Louisiana to northern Florida (periwinkle on map above).



Florida box turtle (*Terrapene carolina bauri*) has a dark carapace with radiating yellow lines. Its head often has yellow lines as well. It has 3-4 toes on each hind foot, and occurs in southeast Georgia and Florida (yellow on map above).



Many of the subspecies can be highly variable, and where their ranges overlap, they interbreed, making it difficult to distinguish one subspecies from another. For more information, visit the NEPARC website (www.pwrc.usgs.gov/neparc). Poster design by Liz Willey.

Photo credits: Mike Jones and Liz Willey. Information based on: Dodd, C. K. Jr. 2001. North American box turtles: a natural history. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, USA.