

BOX TURTLES OF ARKANSAS

THREE-TOED AND ORNATE BOX TURTLES



THREE-TOED BOX TURTLE

TERRAPENE CAROLINA TRIUNGUIS

DISTRIBUTION:
VIRTUALLY STATEWIDE

HABITAT:
FORESTS, WOODLANDS, GRASSLANDS

DESCRIPTION:
THREE TOES ON EACH HIND LEG.
HOWEVER, SPECIMENS WITH FOUR TOES
HAVE BEEN OBSERVED SO THIS IS NOT A
FAILSAFE METHOD FOR IDENTIFYING A
THREE-TOED BOX TURTLE.

THE UPPER SHELL (CARAPACE) OF
THREE-TOED BOX TURTLES CAN VARY
IN COLOR IN RELATION TO HOW OLD AN
INDIVIDUAL IS. THE CARAPACE OF
IMMATURE THREE-TOED BOX TURTLES
ARE TYPICALLY OLIVE BROWN WITH FAINT
YELLOW TO ORANGE MARKINGS. AS THE
TURTLE AGES, THESE MARKINGS FADE
AND THE CARAPACE BECOMES A UNIFORM
OLIVE-BROWN.

THE LOWER PART OF THE SHELL
(PLASTRON), HAS FEW SIGNIFICANT
MARKINGS.



ORNATE BOX TURTLE

TERRAPENE ORNATA ORNATA

DISTRIBUTION:
RECORDED FROM ONLY NINE COUNTIES IN
ARKANSAS

HABITAT:
GRASSLANDS - THIS BOX TURTLE IS A
PRAIRIE SPECIALIST AND NOW QUITE RARE
IN ARKANSAS

DESCRIPTION:
ORNATE BOX TURTLES TYPICALLY HAVE
FOUR TOES ON EACH HIND FOOT, THOUGH
INDIVIDUALS WITH THREE TOES HAVE BEEN
NOTED.

THE CARAPACE OF THIS SPECIES RANGES
IN COLOR FROM DARK BROWN TO NEARLY
BLACK AND IS MARKED BY SEVERAL
RADIATING YELLOW LINES.

THE PLASTRON OF THE ORNATE IS DARK IN
COLORATION AND MARKED BY RADIATING
YELLOW LINES IN CONTRAST TO THE
DARBER PLASTRON OF THE THREE-TOED.
PLASTRON COLORATION IS PROBABLY THE
BEST CHARACTER TO USE WHEN
DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN THE TWO
SPECIES.

