

# Common Snapping Turtle vs. Alligator Snapping Turtle

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Common snapping turtles and alligator snapping turtles are distant relatives. They look alike in a number of ways, but they are distinct from each other as well.

The alligator snapping turtle does not live in a lot of spots, but it does live in the rivers that run through states such as Texas into the Gulf of Mexico. Alligator snapping turtles like water that travels fast. But sometimes, they are content to live in oxbow lakes. An oxbow lake is a U-shaped lake. On the other hand, common snapping turtles inhabit ponds and brackish water.

Now, let us chat about how these turtles look. A lot of people cannot tell them apart. But there are some things that can help us do the job. The shell is one of those things. The shell of an alligator snapping

turtle has three crests or bumps on it, while the common snapping turtle has a flat shell. And what about their skulls? The alligator snapping turtle has a head that is in the shape of a triangle. The common snapping turtle has an oval head.

This brings us to the next fact: an alligator snapping turtle has two distinct features that its cousin does not have. For one thing, it has a red, wormlike flap in its mouth. The flap assists it when it hunts. When it opens its jaw, it attracts fish. They think it is a worm and they swim over to it. However, when the fish get close, they become snacks. No other turtle in the world has such a trick to help it collect fish—not even the common snapping turtle. Alligator snapping turtles also have flesh-like lashes around their eyes, while common snappers do not have lashes.

Common snapping turtles snack on more plants than alligator snapping turtles. Alligator snappers like

to snack on fish and other small animals. They like mollusks and frogs the best. Adult alligator snappers are known to kill small American alligators, though this is not common. They will munch on aquatic plants now and then, too. On the other hand, common snapping turtles eat some animal flesh, such as fish, frogs, reptiles, birds, and small mammals. But they will pick plants over flesh most days.

These are just some of the big differences between alligator snapping turtles and common snapping turtles, but there are more you can find with a little investigating. Once you get started, finding those facts will be a snap!

# Teacher Resources

## Text Easability Scores

If you would like to measure the text easability scores of this passage, please follow the directions below.

1. Visit the Coh-Matrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.

This text passage is archived under *Animals*.

Please note: this non-controlled readable text passage features a **compare & contrast text structure**. As such, it is written to be **at least 80% decodable at Substep 6.2**. A specific decodability score is listed below.

- This text passage is 86.49% decodable at Substep 6.2