

SOFTSHELL TURTLE

(*Apalone mutica*, *Apalone spinifera*, *Apalone ferox*)

ZILLA®

REP YOURSELF™



FAST FACTS

- Named for their unique softshell
- Particularly vulnerable because of shell
- Average lifespan of 25+ years
- Surprisingly fast on land
- Regularly hide in mud and sand
- Should not be handled unless necessary

UNIQUE AND EXOTIC

Like the name suggests, softshell turtles are one of the most unique creatures in the world of turtles thanks to their lack of a hard shell. They are an exotic and peculiar species of turtle that stands out in more ways than one, including their surprising speed on land.

Softshell turtles, in particular females, can grow fairly large. Up to 14 inches long for *Apalone mutica* and *Apalone spinifera*; over 2 feet long for *Apalone ferox*. While they prefer not to be handled due to their vulnerability, softshell turtles make great pets that will develop a bond with their owners through feeding and other daily interactions. Over time, you will build a meaningful connection and have a fascinating and entertaining companion for many years.



NATIVE HABITAT

Softshell turtles are native to Africa, Asia, and North America. Because of their softer protection, these strange and fascinating creatures are vulnerable in the wild to predators, wounds, and infections. As a result, softshell turtles often submerge themselves in mud to hide from threats and can be aggressive when approached.



FEEDING AND DIET

Softshell turtles primarily eat insects, amphibians, eggs, and fish. They should be fed once daily, allowing consumption in 15 minutes. Like most pet turtles, they will readily enjoy dehydrated shrimp treats such as [Zilla® River Shrimp](#) and [Turtle Chasers](#). They will also adapt to eating floating turtle pellets like [Zilla® Turtle Sticks](#). You can also feed your softshell turtle live crickets. Try gut loading your crickets with [Zilla® Gut Load Cricket Drink with calcium](#) for added nutrition before feeding to your turtle.

Check the [Zilla® Feeding Guide](#) for a list of appropriate food options.



RECOMMENDED HOUSING AND ACCESSORIES

Housing a softshell turtle means having no sharp or potentially harmful objects in their tank. They prefer large tanks with very clean water, so water care products like [Zilla® Water Conditioner](#), [Zilla® Miracle Ball](#), and [Zilla® PURE](#) can be important time savers in keeping their environment healthy. Overall water quality is crucial so a good filter should be utilized to keep your softshell turtle happy and healthy.

The size of your softshell turtle's tank should be at least 75-100 gallons depending on the species. The [Aqueon® Standard Glass Terrarium](#) is a great option that comes in multiple sizes and can be paired with the [Zilla® Screen Cover with Center Hinge](#) for easy access to the tank.

Turtles need to bask in order to warm up and regulate their metabolism. Provide a basking area with driftwood or accessories like the [Zilla® Freestanding Floating Basking Platform](#) or [Zilla® Basking Platform Ramp](#). Use thoroughly rinsed play or river sand as substrate to allow them to mimic their natural burrowing behaviors.



TEMPERATURE AND LIGHTING

Maintain a temperature of 70-80°F with a basking area at 90°F. Use bulbs like the [Zilla® Incandescent Spot Bulbs](#) or [Zilla® Mini Halogen Bulbs](#) to create healthy heat and lighting. You can also use heat emitters like the [Zilla® Aquatic Reptile Heater](#) to help with consistent overall water warmth.

UVA and UVB is a necessity for a healthy turtle. Indoor turtles require UVB lighting and supplemental heat lights for 10-12 hours a day. Make sure to provide access to UVA/UVB on basking platforms using any [Zilla® Fluorescent UVA/UVB bulb](#). Remember to replace bulbs every 6 months.

For more information on UV lighting, read [Understanding UVA, UVB, and UVC Reptile Lighting](#).



HANDLING

Over time, you will build a special connection with your turtle during feeding and caring for them in your daily interactions, but be cautious and gentle when it comes to picking them up. Softshell turtles are delicate but capable of biting, so it's best to enjoy watching and interacting with them in other ways rather than handling them.



BE SURE TO WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANY REPTILES

