

Ornate Box Turtle

Read a story about a turtle named Fred and use a turtle puppet.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- 1 be able to name one characteristic of a reptile
- 1 recognize that turtles are reptiles
- 1 be able to name the ornate box turtle as the state reptile of Kansas

MATERIALS FROM TRUNK

Graphic

#3 - Ornate Box Turtle

Object

Turtle puppet

Book

Turtle Time: A Bedtime Story

TEACHER PREPARATION

- 1 Read the book and practice using the puppet.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To celebrate the 125th anniversary of Kansas's statehood, Larry Miller's sixth-grade class in Caldwell decided to nominate the ornate box turtle as the state reptile. On April 14, 1986, their lobbying campaign ended with Governor John Carlin signing the bill.

The ornate box turtle is found from the prairies of western Kansas to the forests of eastern Kansas. It is the most visibly abundant turtle in Kansas. The ornate box turtle is also a dryland turtle, which means that it spends its life on land and not in the water. During the thirty to fifty years of its life it spends a large amount of time crawling through fields, across backyards, and in the woods. The yellow stripes on both the upper shell and lower shell of the ornate box turtle identify this species. Males are smaller and have red eyes while females are larger and usually have yellow-brown eyes.



Turtles are reptiles. This means (1) they are cold-blooded animals, (2) they reproduce by laying eggs out of the water, and (3) they have scales on their body that allow them to live away from the moist areas that amphibians are confined to. Young reptiles are miniature versions of their parents and do not need to go through metamorphosis stages to reach adulthood as do amphibians. Other examples of reptiles are lizards, snakes, and alligators.

Turtles carry their houses with them. The shell of a turtle is made of the carapace (upper shell) and the plastron (lower shell). A hinge arrangement allows the upper and lower shells to close firmly together for defense against predators.

Turtles can move only their head, neck, legs, and tail. All turtles in Kansas lay their eggs on land, in sand or soft soil. The egg shell keeps the growing turtle from getting too dry. From two to fifty eggs are laid in each clutch. Deadly enemies of box turtle eggs and hatchlings are raccoons and skunks.

Ornate box turtles are omnivorous meaning that they eat both plants (fruit, flowers, and mushrooms) and animals (grasshoppers, beetles, earthworms, caterpillars, etc.). As with all turtles the ornate box turtle has no teeth. Instead it cuts its food with the sharp edges of its jaws.

Source:

Kansas Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Avenue, Pratt, KS 67124-8174, 316- 672-5911.

VOCABULARY

Carnivore	An animal that eats the flesh of other animals to survive.
Cold-blooded	Body temperature changes to match the surrounding air or water temperature.
Clutch	A nest of eggs.
Herbivore	An animal that eats only plants.
Omnivorous	Eats both vegetation and meat.
Reptile	One class of cold-blooded animals that lays eggs and has scales on their bodies.
Symbol	Something that stands for something else. Symbols are used to communicate words, emotions, directions, etc.



ACTIVITY

- 1) Show class graphic #3, the Ornate Box Turtle. Tell them that this turtle is a state symbol. Ask the class if they know what a symbol is.

® *Something that represents something else. Examples might include stop signs or red traffic lights that mean stop, green lights that mean go, and railroad crossing signs that mean stop and look for a train before crossing.*

Tell them the ornate box turtle is a symbol for Kansas. It is our state reptile. Ask for a show of hands from those who have seen a turtle.

Ask the class what they know about turtles. Tell them a little about the ornate box turtle.

® *The ornate box turtle is a type of turtle found all over Kansas. It is a dryland turtle, which means it lives on the land instead of in the water. The yellow stripes on both the upper and lower shells help to identify this turtle. The ornate box turtle is omnivorous; it eats both plants and meat.*

Explain how the ornate box turtle became Kansas's state reptile.

® *In 1986 the schoolchildren in Kansas successfully nominated the ornate box turtle as the state reptile.*

- 2) Have the class sit in a circle around you and explain that you're going to read a book about a turtle. Have the turtle puppet close by but hidden from the class.

Tell the class that after you finish reading the book a surprise visitor is going to come and talk about what they've read about turtles in the book.

Read the book, *Turtle Time: A Bedtime Story*.

- 3) Take out the turtle puppet (the surprise visitor). Use Fred, the puppet, to discuss the book with the class. The following questions may help with this discussion.

Begin by holding the turtle with the head and legs pulled in like he's asleep. Have the children say "Wake up Fred" to wake him up. Let Fred introduce himself as the turtle in the book. Use the fact that he was sleeping inside his shell to begin a discussion about the shell of a turtle.

± turtles carry their houses (shells) with them

® *A turtle's house is made of an upper and lower shell that the turtle can clamp*



together for protection. Turtles don't need houses or raincoats like in the book. Turtles are pretty self-sufficient; they carry what they need with them. Shells also offer protection from animals that may hurt the turtle.

± turtles are reptiles

® *Reptiles are cold-blooded animals. They reproduce by laying eggs out of the water and they have scales on their bodies (the turtle's shell).*

* *Cold-blooded animals cannot warm themselves by snuggling under a pile of blankets or putting on socks. They need the sun or another source of heat to warm them up.*

* *Reptiles hatch from eggs. Not everything hatching from an egg is a reptile (ex. birds).*

* *Scales allow reptiles to live away from the moist areas that amphibians, such as frogs, are confined to. Other types of reptiles are lizards, snakes, and alligators.*

± food they eat

® *The description of bringing ice cream for a treat is a good place to discuss food. Some turtles are herbivores meaning they eat plants, some are carnivores meaning they eat meat (such as crickets and beetles), and some are omnivorous meaning they eat both. The ornate box turtle is omnivorous. Turtles do not have teeth. Their jaws have razor sharp edges that they use for chewing food.*

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

- 1) Contact Kansas Wildlife and Parks for more information or educational materials dealing with the ornate box turtle. Wildlife Education Service, 512 SE 25th Avenue, Pratt, KS 67124; 316-672-5911, ext. 176.
- 2) Ask the class if they know of any other animals that carry their homes with them. Examples may include snails, clams, and even people (mobile homes, tipis of the past, etc.).

If you plan to keep a turtle in your classroom please read this:

Keeping a reptile or amphibian as a pet can provide a learning opportunity, but make sure you know what you're getting into. "Many reptiles and amphibians require special care in captivity, so a trip to the library or a visit with a local wildlife professional may be necessary to learn how to keep the critter happy and healthy. Also, reptiles and amphibians in Kansas are protected by collection laws and limits." For more information contact the Milford Nature Center, 3115 Hatchery Drive, Junction City, KS 66441; 785-238-LEAF.

