



**Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons*

Japanese Pond Turtle (*Mauremys japonica*)

Japan's "Stone" Turtles

Also sometimes known locally as the "stone turtles", Japanese pond turtles are medium sized to large, semi-aquatic turtles that are also known as the Chinese pond turtle. These medium sized to large, semi-aquatic turtles have a solid colored, brown, olive brown, to grayish brown carapace with a slight dorsal keel. The head, neck, and limbs are dark olive to olive gray with numerous pale yellow to white stripes, streaks, and dashes on the head and neck. Japanese pond turtles are frequent baskers, and will thermoregulate and sun themselves on rocks, logs, and shore banks as do many other aquatic to semi-aquatic turtles. Unfortunately, many species of Asian pond turtles, and other Asian turtle species, face continued threats from a variety of human activities including habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, as well as over-collection. Although these turtles are frequently farmed in certain areas of the world, these semi-aquatic turtles can become personable and enjoyable turtles to keep with the right level of knowledge, preparation, and research.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Suborder: Cryptodira

Family: Geoemydidae

Genus: *Mauremys*

Species: *Mauremys japonica**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Japanese pond turtles may attain longevity of 20 to 40 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The Japanese pond turtle is a semi-aquatic turtle species with a fairly broad range over much of Japan and surrounding islands and localities thereof. Within this range, this and other species within the Asian pond turtle genus are also indigenous to China and Korea, to Taiwan. Within this range, Japanese pond turtles are aquatic to semi-aquatic turtles that occupy a variety of

permanent to semi-permanent water bodies including ponds, lakes, rivers, streams, and their basins, marshes, canals, swamplands, ditches, and even garden, ornamental, and other agricultural and/or suburban to urban areas with ample basking areas within or near the water such as partially submerged rocks, logs, and other nearby or overhanging vegetation or debris, banks, and other similar areas.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

A fairly medium sized, semi-aquatic species, Japanese pond turtles usually range from 5 to 9 inches in carapace, or upper shell length. The sexes are dimorphic in size, with females being larger than males.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Semi-Aquatic. Japanese pond turtles are semi aquatic turtle species. Provide a sturdy, escape proof aquarium or commercially available plastic or galvanized stock tank or turtle tub of sufficient size with an elevated dock or basking area/access to dry land using a substrate dam. The latter are perhaps preferred for maintaining aquatic to semi-aquatic turtles in, as they are easier to clean, move/transport, and maintain than aquariums. Provide a minimum of 10 gallons of space per inch of shell, or about 40 to 90 gallons for most adult turtles. A general rule of thumb to follow for most aquatic to semi-aquatic turtles is to provide water that is at least 1 ½ to 2 times the turtle's height in depth to allow for complete submersion, and at least two to three times the carapace length for adequate swimming and movement. A powerful water filter rated at least twice that of the amount of water in the enclosure is highly recommended for aquatic turtles, as they are messy and require frequent cleaning and regular water changes. Use a submersible water heater with a guard to maintain water temperatures of 75 to 85 degrees F. Substrate is optional, and foregoing it makes for easier cleaning and maintenance, but small to medium sized gravel can be used. Additional rocks, logs, live or artificial foliage can also be provided for additional foraging, basking, and hiding opportunities.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of Japanese pond turtles in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone and shell growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Pyramiding of the scutes and shell can also occur due to poor or improper diet, lighting, or heating. Always be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. These turtles require a thermal gradient using a ceramic or radiant heat emitter, UTH (or under tank heating pad), submersible water heater, and UVA/UVB overhead lighting. Ambient and cool end temperatures should be within 75 to 85 degrees F and the basking area from 85 to 95 degrees F. Water temperatures should be within 70 to 80 degrees F as well. Also be sure to maintain a light cycle of 12 to 14 hours per day, and monitor temperatures with a quality thermometer. Be sure to provide a basking area or platform for your turtle to emerge completely from the water as well. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. While humidity is somewhat less important for most aquatic to semi-aquatic turtles, a general humidity level should be at, or around about 60 to 75%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Omnivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, Japanese pond turtles are primarily omnivorous to carnivorous, feeding on aquatic to semi-aquatic insects, crustaceans, mollusks, and other invertebrates, as well as smaller vertebrates including small fish, amphibians, and carrion, or dead and decaying plant and animal material. Some algae and other aquatic plants may also be consumed.

In captivity, variety is important with most aquatic to semi-aquatic turtle's diets. These turtles can be given feeder insects of appropriate size including crickets, roaches, mealworms, waxworms, superworms, or other invertebrates. They can also eat small, frozen-thawed rodents of appropriate size, but offer these sparingly, if at all. Other food items that will be accepted by these turtles can include many of the commercially available aquatic to semi-aquatic turtle or omnivore mix diets, small feeder fish of appropriate nutritional value, earthworms, redworms, freeze dried shrimp or krill, or some other meats. Dog and cat foods can also be used, but use these sparingly, if at all as well. They can also be fed some chopped greens, fruits, and vegetable material as well. Commercially available canned or pelleted turtle diets are not good staples for feeding aquatic to semi-aquatic turtles, and should not exceed roughly 25% of their diets; Variety is always best.

Gutloading any feeder insects and providing additional calcium and vitamin D3 is essential for these turtle's optimal health and well-being. Without proper supplementation, they are susceptible to Metabolic Bone Disease, pyramiding of the shell, and other abnormal bone, growth, and health maladies. Feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your turtle, but typically in most cases should be twice to three times weekly. Do not overfeed them, though as obesity and other health related issues can become a concern. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Most small to mid-sized turtle and tortoise species that are not aggressive or prone to biting can be picked up and handled either by placing both hands along both sides of the shell, or from the rear of the carapace with the thumb on the carapace and index through pinky fingers on the plastron to reduce the chances of being kicked, scratched, or nipped when they are threatened. Although most species of chelonians are not outwardly aggressive, defensive, or dangerous, they can become stressed as a result of over-handling, however, and some species, and even individual animals can be shyer than others. These are some considerations to keep in mind when handling any chelonian species.**Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens**

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. We cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety.

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