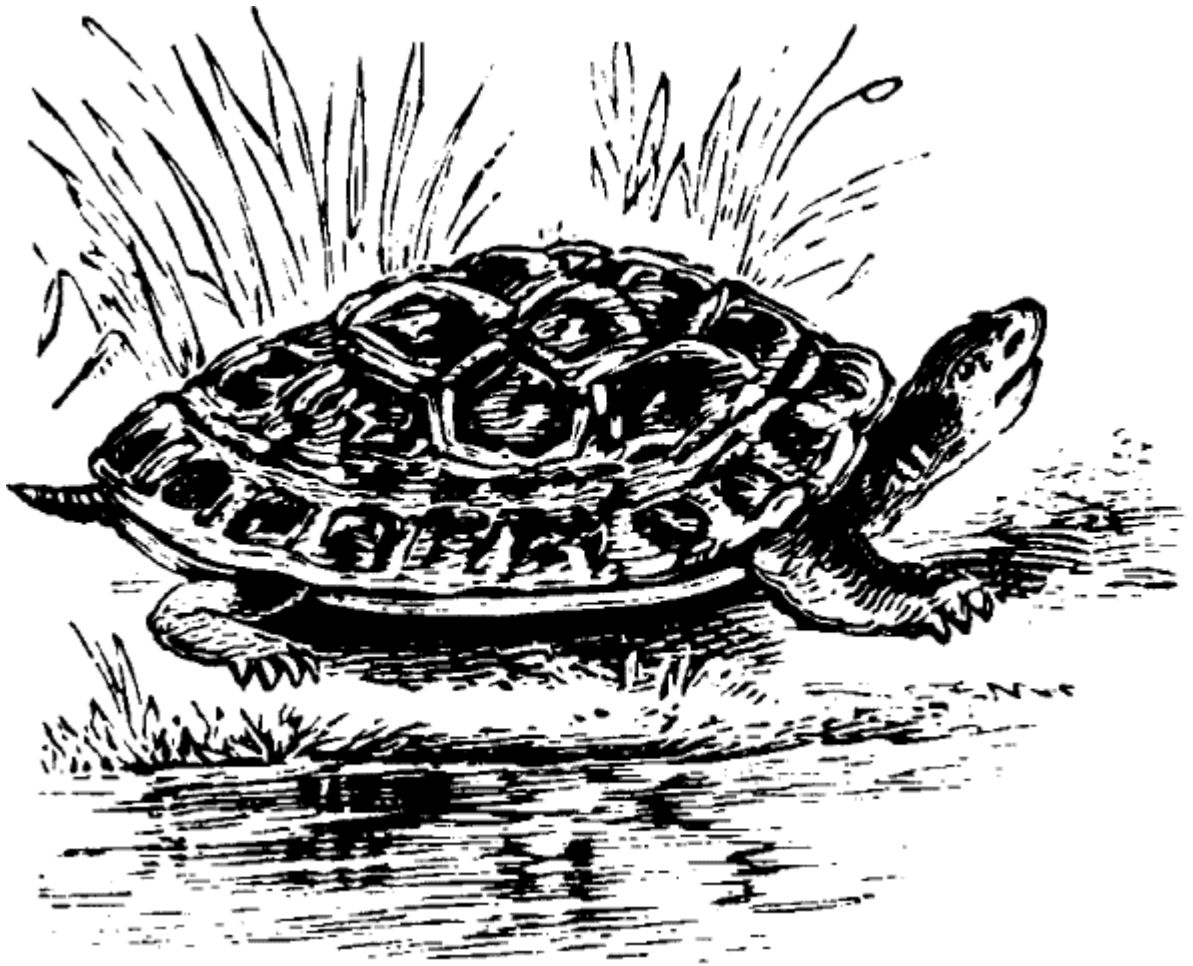


# Turtle Tales



# National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium Conservation Education Curriculum

**Target Grades:** Pre-K - 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

**Key Words:** Scales, Shell, Carapace,  
Plastron, Hibernate, Reptile,  
Habitat, Eggs, Cold blooded

**Subject Areas:** Turtles, cold blooded, turtle  
habitats and food

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Time can be extended by request

## **Title: *Turtle Tales***

Program presented on site at Museum.

### **Summary:**

*What animal comes in all shades of green, has scales and a shell? If you guessed a turtle, you're right! Many different types of turtles call the Mississippi river home. Explore the turtle world with the help of a turtle tale and some live turtles that live right here at the aquarium.*

**Objectives:**

To learn about turtles in a non-threatening way, as well as their habitats, foods, physiology, habits, myths, and folk lore.

**Group Size:**

Any

**Background for Educators:**

Turtle Facts:

1. Shell covers most of the body
2. Three parts to shell
  - a. carapace- covers top of body (name for segments on shell are scutes)
  - b. plastron- covers bottom of body
  - c. bridge- attaches two halves together
3. Lived on Earth around 200 million years ago; about the same time as the first dinosaurs appeared
4. Some native American legends claim the world rests on the back of a giant turtle shell
5. Turtles do not shed their shell. Instead they grow a larger section of shell that pushes up the old section
6. backbone and ribs are fused to carapace
7. Excellent eyesight (can see colors) and sense of smell
8. All lay eggs on land (even sea turtles)

**Materials Needed:**

- Live turtles from education animal collection.
- Turtle puppets, shells, and props
- Story book on turtles

**Procedure:**

Begin by telling the students that you are not taking any questions from them but that you may ask some questions of them. Some sample questions to the students might be what cold blooded means, if and why a turtle is a reptile,

if a turtle can leave its shell, what is it called when a turtle sleeps through the winter under the mud of the pond, and any other teaching questions.

Show them the turtle puppet and shells to discuss the turtle physiology, habitats, backbone, scales, etc.

After the turtle has been discussed in terms appropriate for the age group of children, show them the live education turtles, and talk about each one. Allow the turtle to walk on the floor a bit so that the students can see how the turtle moves. If it is a small group the turtle can be touched on the shell by the youth, but if it is a large group this might be best done after the program as the youth are leaving the presentation area.

Read a story such as *Yertle the Turtle* by Dr. Seuss (copy in Mark Wagner's office), or "How Turtle Flew South for the Winter" on page 157 of *Keepers of the Earth* by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac (in Amber's office).

**Evaluation:**

By interest and response from students

**Additional resources:**

Museum & Aquarium Curriculum on reptiles and Amphibians

**Extensions:**

Visit and observe turtles in the aquarium exhibits and in the museum wetland.

Related programs available at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium:

***Rockin' Reptiles and Awesome Amphibians***

**Credits:**

Mark D. Wagner, Iowa State University Extension, Director of Education for the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium; Dubuque, Iowa

Meggan Daniels, Science education supervisor at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium