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## The Snake-necked Turtle ( *Chelodina Longicollis* )

### APPEARANCE

The turtle's body is encased in a hard shell which is divided into 2 sections. The lower section is the Plastron and the upper section is the Carapace. The two sections are jointed together by the bridges that are located both sides of the body between the fore and hind limbs. Their feet are webbed and they curl their heads back into their shell by horizontal movement. All freshwater turtles have a thin, transparent eyelid that covers their eye while they are submerged. Turtles do not have an external ear opening and instead have a "tympanum" (eardrum) that is covered with skin. The shell can measure up to 25cm.

### LIFESTYLE

The Turtle is aquatic and is not capable of swallowing food unless submerged in water. They only leave the water to lay eggs, bask in the sun or seek more favourable conditions in circumstances such as food shortage or drought.

### FOOD

Turtles are essentially ambush feeders. They strike with their mouths open, drawing in large quantities of water containing their prey. They eat small fish, worms, insect larvae, water snails, freshwater prawns, freshwater mussels, crickets and small yabbies. Their diet also includes a wide variety of vegetation.

### BREEDING

Turtles usually mate in early to late spring and also late summer to early autumn, depending on their geographic location. Female turtles are capable of storing sperm inside their bodies over winter or sometimes longer to take advantage of good laying conditions. In the wild turtles lay 1 or 2 clutches of eggs in riverbanks, well above the water line. Clutches may consist of between 5 – 30 eggs.

