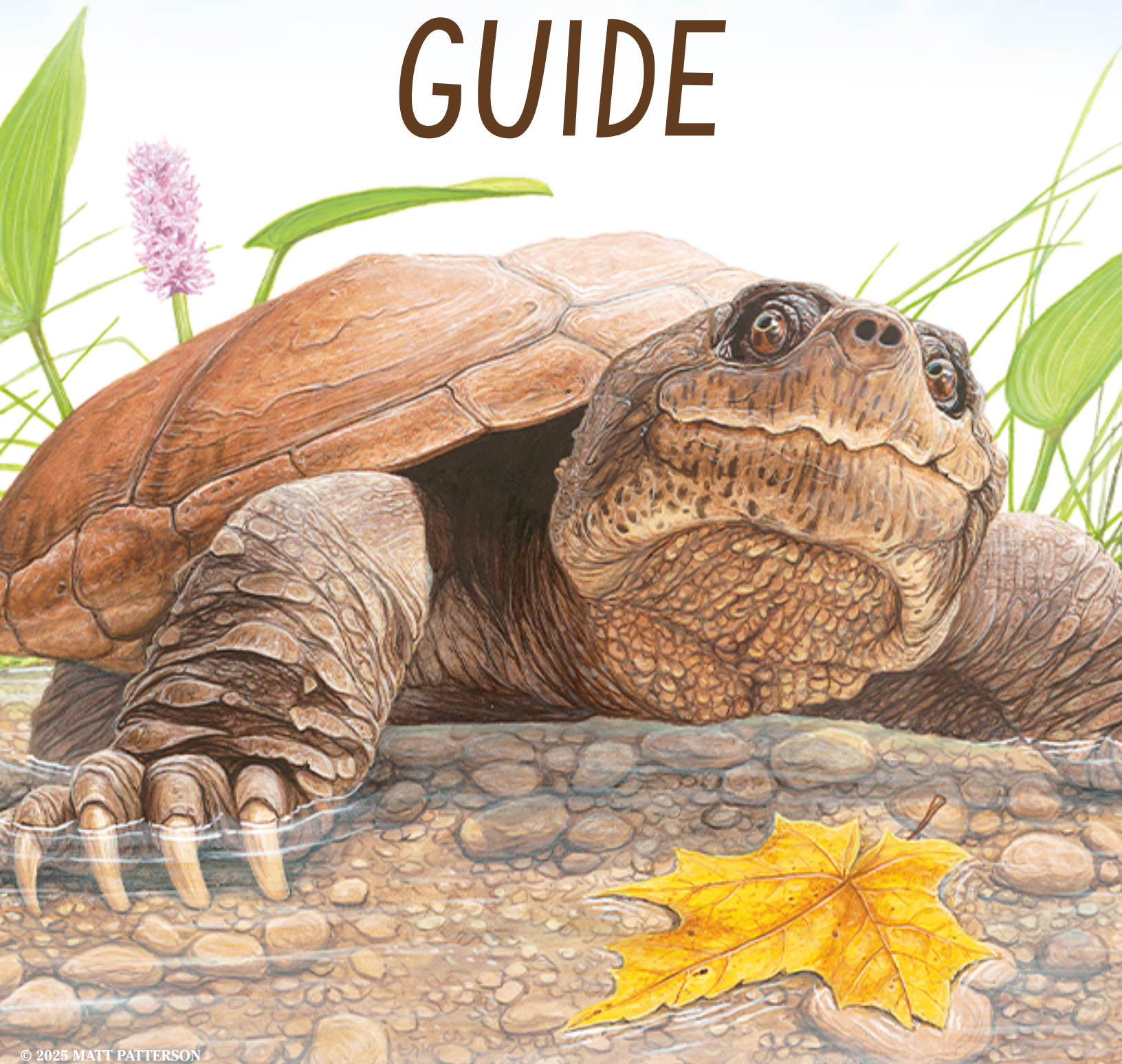


*THE BOOK OF TURTLES AND THE TRUE AND LUCKY LIFE OF A TURTLE*

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



© 2025 MATT PATTERSON

Includes Printable Coloring Sheets from the Illustrator!



# LET'S LEARN ABOUT TURTLES!

How to Use *The Book of Turtles* and *The True and Lucky Life of a Turtle* in the Classroom

Show the two books to the students and discuss the difference between fiction and nonfiction. Introduce each book by reading the first couple of pages out loud. Ask the class if they think each book is fiction or nonfiction. How do they know?

Ask your students what they already know about turtles and create a “Turtle Facts” list. As they read the books, students will decide if their ideas are indeed true facts. Prepare “true” and “false” sticky notes for the students to place next to their ideas after they are confirmed or refuted.

Another way to help the students focus on important details as they read is to present them with a list of question words: **Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?** Have your students write responses to these questions as they read each book. For *The Book of Turtles*, some examples might be **who** the book is about, **what** is unique about turtles, **where** turtles live, **when** turtles first lived on the planet, **why** turtles have a shell, and **how** turtles adapt to their environment. For *The True and Lucky Life of a Turtle*, they might write **who** the main character is, **what** happened to him, **where** these events occurred, **why** he was both a lucky and an unlucky turtle, and **how** he was rescued.

Remind students that as they go through the books, they should monitor their reading. They should ask themselves, “Do I understand what I am reading? Have I learned anything new?” Provide opportunities for the students to check in with a partner to discuss something they have learned or wondered about as they read.

Students can also organize their thoughts about each book using a graphic organizer, which should have a place to record the main idea of each book and spaces to include relevant details that support the main idea.

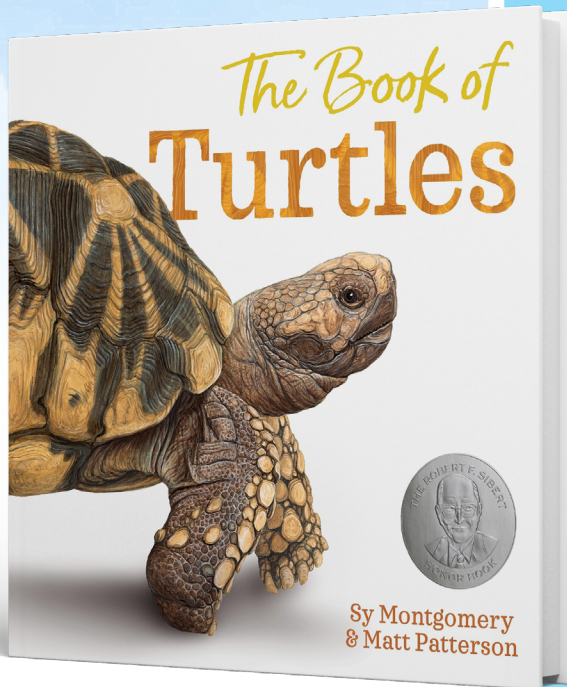


## SY MONTGOMERY

In addition to researching films, articles, and thirty-nine books, National Book Award finalist and *New York Times* bestseller Sy Montgomery has been honored with a Sibert Medal, three Sibert Honors, two Science Book and Film Prizes from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, four honorary degrees, and many other awards. She lives in Hancock, New Hampshire, with her husband, Howard Mansfield, and their border collie, Thurber.

## MATT PATTERSON

Matt Patterson received a degree from the Art Institute of Boston in illustration. His vivid, lifelike art has won national and international acclaim, including the Golden Turtle Award and—twice—the Roger Tory Peterson Wild America Art Award. His work has hung in prestigious galleries, museums, and shows, including the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum’s Birds in Art exhibition, and he is a fellow at the Explorers Club in New York. Matt’s debut picture book, *The Book of Turtles*, was a Sibert Honor Book.



## About the Book

Tons of terrific turtle facts can be found in this fascinating book featuring all there is to know about turtles! Readers will learn about turtle anatomy, different species of turtles, turtle behavior, famous turtles, why some turtles are endangered, and what the reader can do to help turtles survive in their environment. Beautiful, detailed illustrations complement this comprehensive guide.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When did the first turtles live on our planet?
- What makes the turtle unique?
- What is the lifespan of a turtle? Why can they live so long?
- How many species of turtles are there?
- Are all tortoises turtles? Are all turtles tortoises?
- What is the largest turtle? The fastest turtle? The most colorful turtle?
- Are turtles intelligent? How do scientists know?
- Turtles don't have ears, so how do they hear?
- Who are the celebrity turtles discussed in the book? Why are they famous?
- How are turtles born?
- Why are some species of turtles endangered?
- How can we help turtles?
- What is one fact about turtles that surprised you?
- How is this book similar to *The True and Lucky Life of a Turtle*? How is it different?



# ACTIVITIES

## TURTLE TALK

Many different species of turtles are introduced in this book. Have students work in pairs or individually to research a turtle species using books, periodicals, and websites.

Younger students can write a few interesting or fun facts about their species, while older students should include facts about their turtle's habitat, lifespan, diet, appearance, behavior, and predators, along with any fun facts.

Students can present their findings to the class.

## TURTLE ART

There are myriad ways to make a turtle, and here are a few suggestions. Young students can make a moving turtle by using paper plates and following this video: [https://youtu.be/\\_MxH4SmfFfw?si=mxVPKGRGR\\_wEc0Sw](https://youtu.be/_MxH4SmfFfw?si=mxVPKGRGR_wEc0Sw).

Students can learn how to draw a sea turtle with help from Art For Kids Hub: <https://youtu.be/6DXTWTbd8G4>. They can create a turtle using rocks (<https://youtu.be/kUurino7NQ>) or clay (<https://youtu.be/DXsUXexLUVU>).

Or students can choose their own medium and design their own turtle!

## PLAY IT SAFE

A turtle's shell acts as protective armor and keeps it safe. As a class or in small groups, have the students research other ways that animals protect themselves and stay safe.

Create a class chart that shows the animals and their methods of defense (e.g., spikes, camouflage, venom, horns).



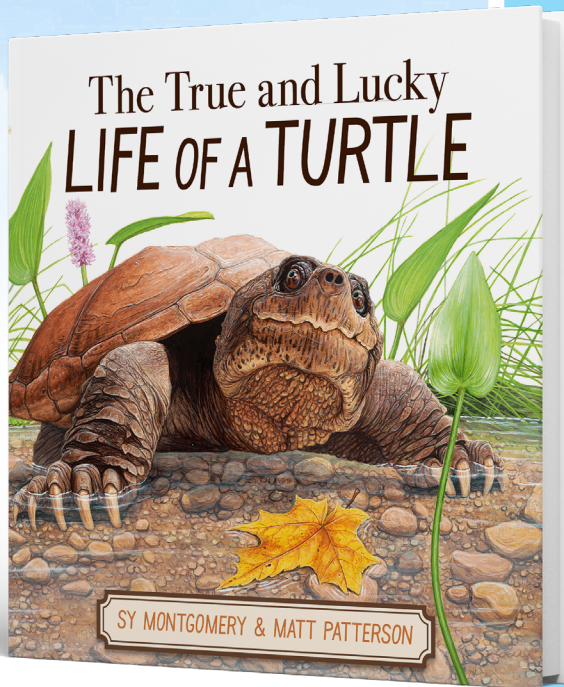
## HEAD START FOR TURTLES

Turtles should never be taken from the wild, and pet store turtles need care for a lifetime that might last 100 years or more!

If you want a turtle in the classroom, contact your local Fish and Game department and see if they have a Head Starting program so your class can help raise native baby turtles for release into the wild where they belong.

This activity will provide students with opportunities to learn about turtles, while also learning how to be a responsible classroom citizen.





## About the Book

This is the story of Fire Chief, a snapping turtle who is lucky enough to find a wonderful place to live. But one unlucky day, an accident leaves him critically injured. Luckily, his human friends care for him and help him to recover. And with even more luck, his friends find a way to keep him safe and happy for the rest of his days!

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe how Fire Chief's mother lays her eggs.
- What are the threats to a turtle's nest? What predators eat baby turtles?
- Where does baby Fire Chief choose to live? Why is this a good location for him?
- When do people spot Fire Chief? What does he look like?
- How does Fire Chief get his name?
- What does Fire Chief do when the seasons change? Why?
- How do you know that Fire Chief lived a long life?
- What happens to Fire Chief's town? Why is this a problem?
- What very unlucky thing happens to Fire Chief?
- Who comes to Fire Chief's rescue? How do they save him?
- What do the rescuers do to help him recover?
- When Fire Chief recovers, he still has a problem. What is it?
- How do people help solve his problem?
- Describe the habitat Fire Chief's friends create for him.
- Read the section "THIS IS A TRUE STORY" at the end of the book. What facts does the author know are true? What facts are assumed to be true?
- How is this book similar to *The Book of Turtles*? How is it different?



# ACTIVITIES

## NO PROBLEM

Ask the students to describe the problem Fire Chief encounters when the town paves the road between the two ponds and then discuss the solution.

Afterwards, have the students discuss a problem they have experienced and how that problem was solved. Students will then compose a story that includes a problem to be solved. It can be a true story or a fictional one, as long as it is centered on a problem and a solution.

When the stories are completed, students will share their work with a partner. Partners should try to guess how the problem is solved before the reader finishes sharing the story.

## TO THE RESCUE!

At the end of the book, the author includes several organizations that rescue and rehabilitate animals.

Explore these websites with the students. The first link ([https://www.nrwildlife.org/page/Found\\_Injured\\_Wildlife](https://www.nrwildlife.org/page/Found_Injured_Wildlife)) is particularly helpful because it provides step-by-step information on what to do if you find an injured animal.

If possible, invite an animal rescue employee to visit the class to talk about their experiences and to explain how everyone can help protect animals.

## TIMES ARE CHANGING

Discuss how Fire Chief's town changes over time. What happens? Why? Ask the students how they think their own town has changed over time.

For younger students, provide old photos of how their town looked, and discuss how and why it has changed. Older students can use books or websites to research how their community looked in the past and then compare and contrast that with how it looks now.

Students will write about how their community has changed, why, and how it affects the people and animals who live there. If possible, arrange a class trip to the local historical society.

## SNAP TO IT

Read the section "ABOUT SNAPPING TURTLES." Ask the students to use the information from this section to write and illustrate "A Guide to Snapping Turtles" or "How to Move a Snapping Turtle."

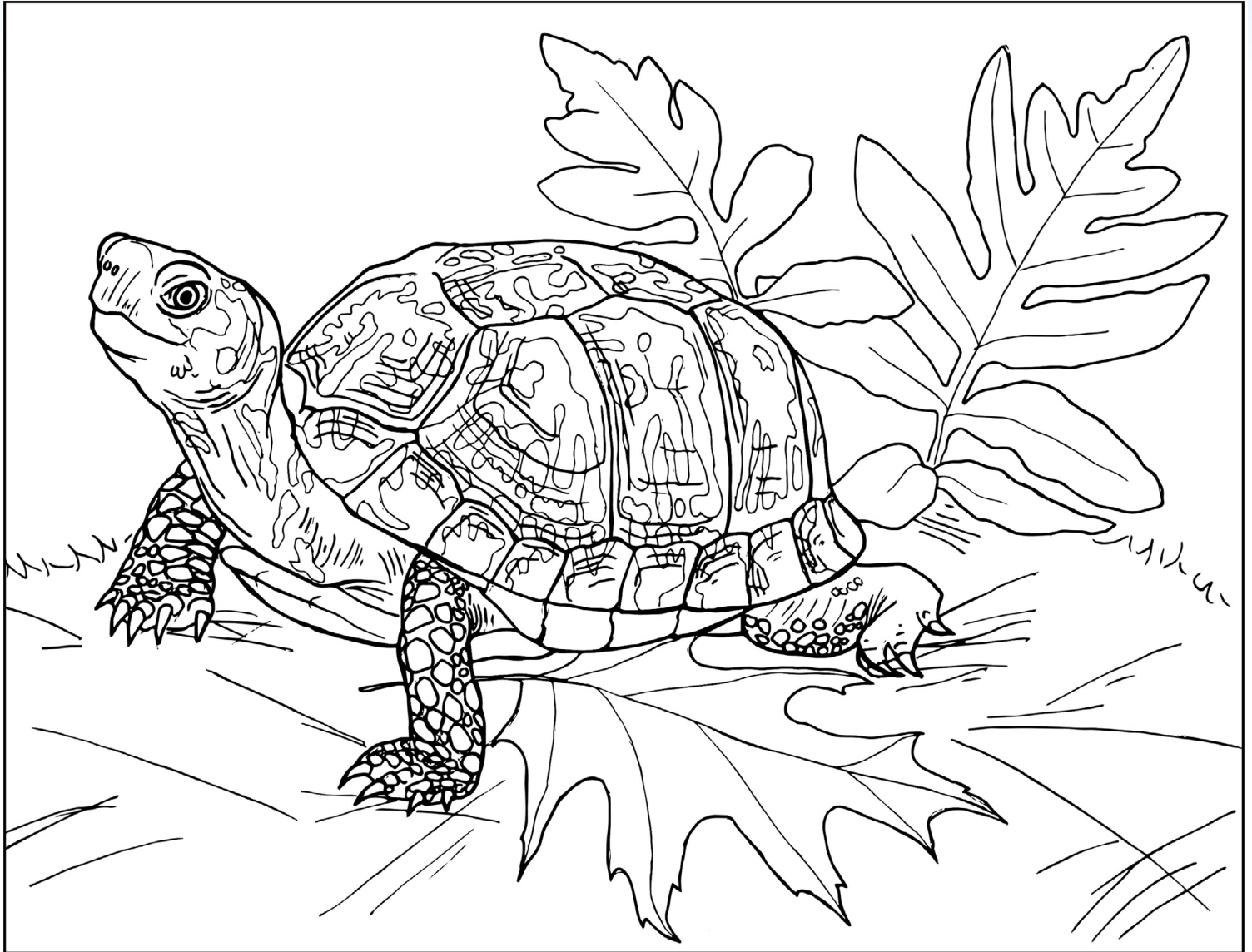
With younger students, one guide can be created by the class. Older students can write their own individual guides.

When completed, these can be shared with another class.





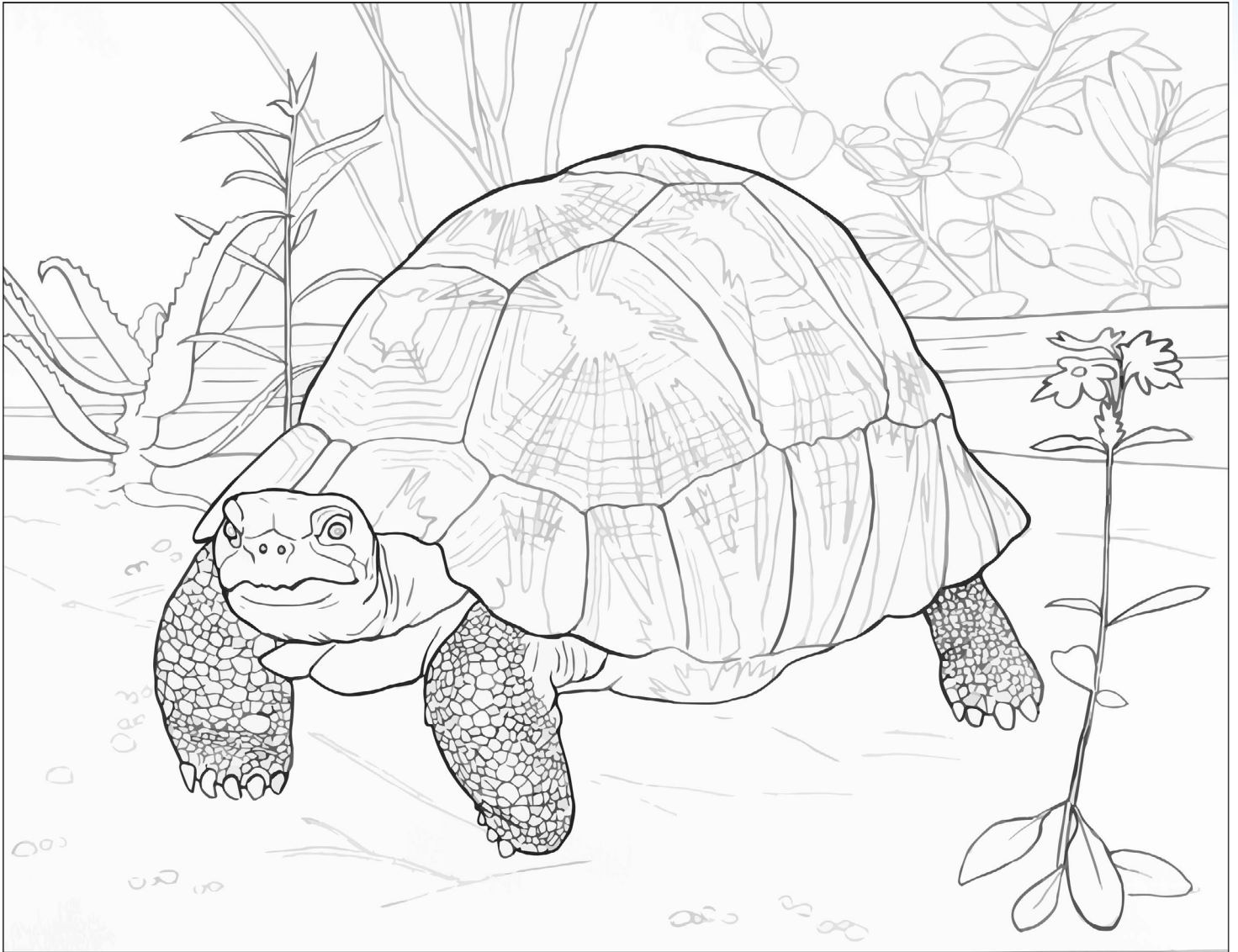
# PRINTABLE COLORING SHEETS



[www.mpattersonart.com](http://www.mpattersonart.com)  
Instagram @stoneridgeartstudios

Eastern Box Turtle

# PRINTABLE COLORING SHEETS

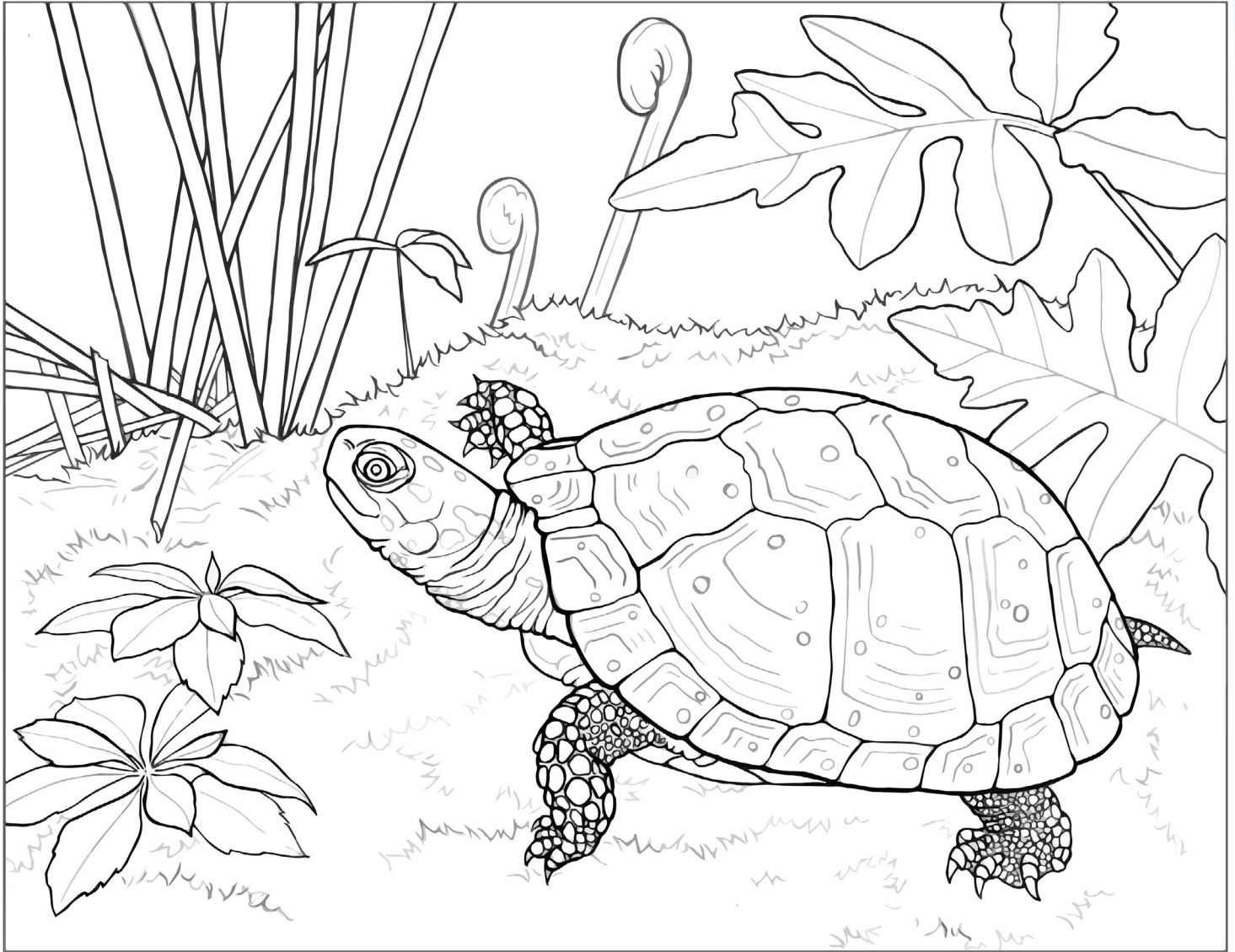


[www.mpattersonart.com](http://www.mpattersonart.com)  
Instagram @stoneridgeartstudios

Radiated Tortoise



# PRINTABLE COLORING SHEETS



[www.mpattersonart.com](http://www.mpattersonart.com)  
Instagram @stoneridgeartstudios

Spotted Turtle

# PRINTABLE COLORING SHEETS



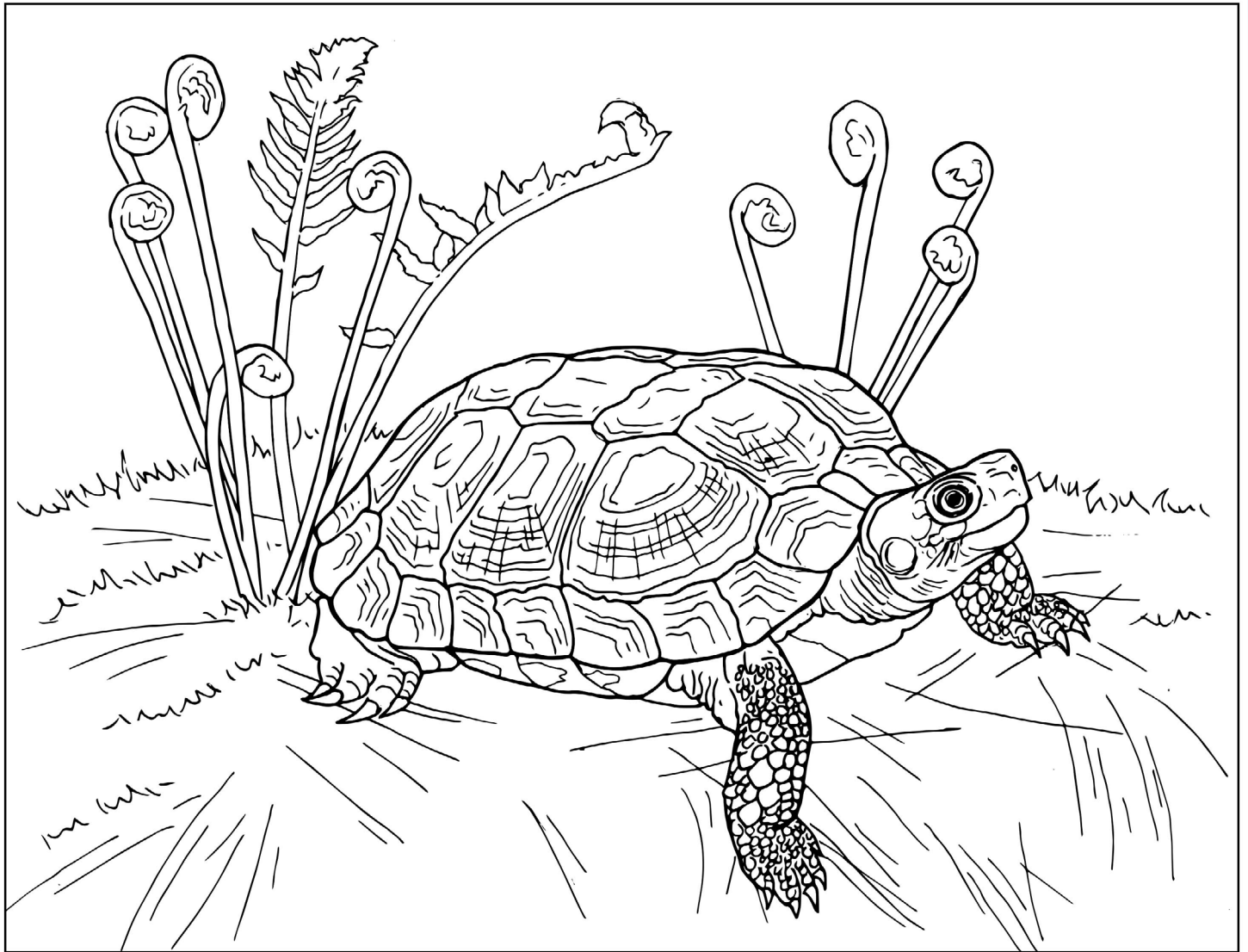
Blanding's Turtle



[www.mpattersonart.com](http://www.mpattersonart.com)  
Instagram @stoneridgeartstudios



# PRINTABLE COLORING SHEETS



Wood Turtle



[www.mpattersonart.com](http://www.mpattersonart.com)  
Instagram @stoneridgeartstudios