



How to Safely Contain an Injured Turtle

1. Our first priority is your safety! Turtles are commonly injured in roadways when hit by a car, so first and foremost, don't put yourself or others in danger when getting out of your car to pick up an injured turtle. If there is a lot of traffic, you can call the local police for assistance before exiting your vehicle.
2. A turtle's main defense is to bite so be sure you keep your hands away from its head at all times. Note that a defensive turtle can move and turn around quickly.
3. If you have gloves or a jacket available, it is wise to wear them to protect your hands and arms from being scraped by the turtle's strong hind legs.
4. Never pick a turtle up by their tail. This can cause permanent damage to their spine.
5. To safely pick up a turtle, you'll just want to keep your hands out of its bite range. All turtles, but especially snapping and softshell turtles, can reach a remarkable distance to their sides and over their back when they strike. To be safe, hold them along the back edge of their shell as seen in the photo. Keep your hands behind the mid-line of the turtle, no farther forward than just in front of the hind legs.
6. Keeping the turtle low to the ground in case you drop them, place them in a box, or other container, ideally with a lid to prevent the turtle from climbing out of the box. If you are in your car and don't have a container with you, consider placing them on the floor mat in the back seat. Covering them with a towel or other item may keep them more stationary while you travel.
7. Before leaving, it is very important to make note of the EXACT location you have found the turtle. Take note of cross-streets or any landmarks that may help us locate this location at the time of release. If you have a smart phone, you can drop a pin on your map application to get GPS coordinates of the location the turtle was found. If you don't already have an appointment, please call Dane County Humane Society's Wildlife Center right away at 608-287-3235. The law allows a member of the public 24 hours to transport the turtle to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, but the sooner the turtle receives care the better its chances of successful treatment.



Note the position of her hands in this photo. Just in front of the hind legs is as far forward as you should go to handle a snapping turtle.

8. During transport to the wildlife center, please keep the car quiet by leaving the radio off and keeping voices low. For more information about safely transporting wildlife once contained, please click [HERE](#).
9. Turtles are very resilient. Even if you aren't sure if the turtle is still alive, please pick it up and transport it to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Sometimes it can be hard to tell if it is alive, but even if it is not alive, if it is a female turtle, there may be eggs that can be harvested for incubation and once hatched, the babies can be released back into the habitat that the mother had occupied.



Preventing Road Mortality in Turtles

Each spring, turtles are on the move for breeding and seeking out good nesting sites to lay their eggs, and then again in the fall as they return to their hibernation sites. As they make their journey, many will risk their lives crossing roadways. You can save turtles by being on the lookout for turtles in the roadways, slowing down around wetlands, and helping them safely cross the roads. Below are some guidelines to follow to be sure both you and the turtle stay safe!

1. When helping a turtle cross the road, always move them across the road in the same direction they were already heading, even if they are heading away from an apparent water source.
2. Do not relocate the turtle. Simply move them to the other side of the road they are crossing, and let them be on their way. While moving them to water may seem like the kind thing to do, in reality, it could just make their journey longer and more dangerous as they reroute back to their original destination.
3. Pick up the turtle as described above, remembering to keep your hands out of their strike zone. Alternatively, if you don't want to pick the turtle up, you can use a blunt object such as a stick, shovel, ice scraper or other similar item you may already have in your car to push the across the road, or utilize a car mat to put under them and then slide them across the road.
4. Large snapping turtles can be a bit intimidating for people to help. Click [HERE](#) to view this great video that will demonstrate some safe options for moving a snapping turtle off the road.
5. Be sure to wash your hands after handling the turtle.
6. Report your sighting to the [Wisconsin Turtle Conservation Program](#), a citizen-based monitoring program aimed at identifying high-mortality locations along roads in order to better conserve Wisconsin's eleven turtle species.