European Pond Terrapin (Tortoise)

Regno: fauna
Reptiles
emysorbicularis.jpg [1]

European Pond Terrapin (Tortoise) - *Emys orbicularis*

Relatively short-limbed terrapin. Its shell grows without ripples or ridges and the terrapin can completely withdraw its head and part of its limbs and tail inside.

Generally dark background colour, ranging from black to reddish-brown. Skin finely spotted with yellow. The males are much smaller than the females (on average 12 and 19 cm long respectively).

It lives in various types of aquatic habitat, including rivers, but prefers still or slow moving waters. During the hotter hours of the day it can often be seen basking out of the water. It spends the winter period hidden in the mud or in the ground near the water banks.

Breeding takes place in spring and summer. The females dig a little hole in the ground, where they lay 7-9 pergameneous (leathery-skinned) eggs at a time. The young hatch out after about 2 months or even the following spring.

The Pond Terrapin feeds on small vertebrates (like frogs, newts, fish and the eggs and fledglings of water birds) as well as aquatic invertebrates (molluscs, arthropods and worms).

This species is included in List II of the Habitat Directive no. 92/43/CEE and List II of the Bern Convention.

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