

Key to the Freshwater Turtles of South Australia



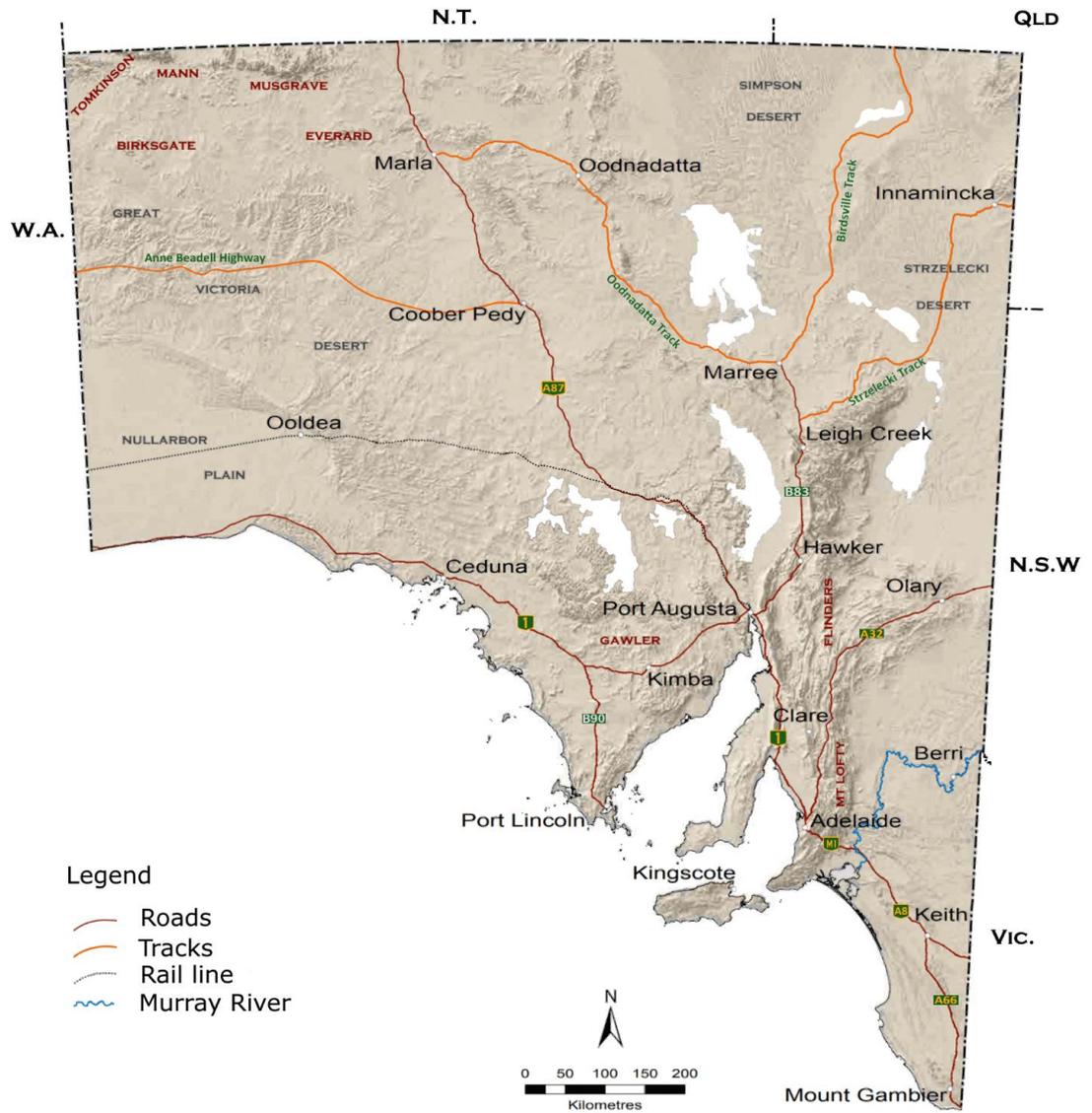
Macquarie turtle, *Emydura macquarii*

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Version: November 2025
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The Freshwater Turtles of South Australia

Geographic Distribution



Map* showing place names and geographical features as well as some main roads and major desert tracks, to assist with interpreting the following distribution maps.

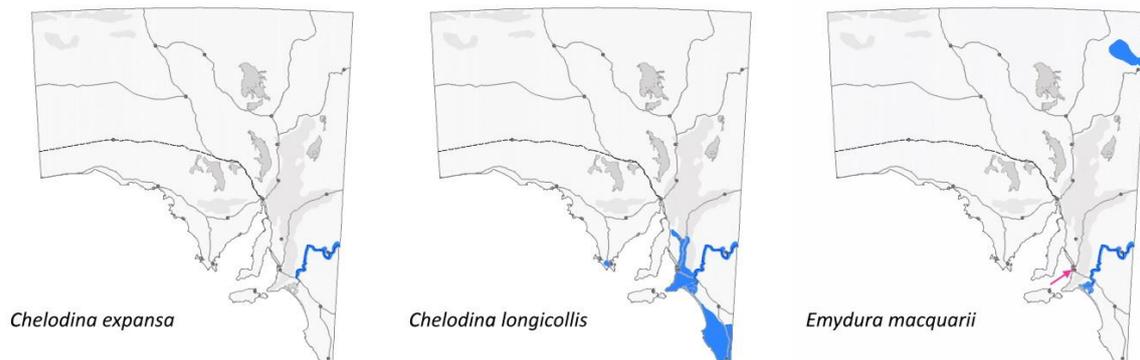
Distribution maps show known and likely occurrence, given suitable habitat.

*modified from original by Department of Environment & Water.

Three species of freshwater turtles (or “tortoises” if you prefer; either name will do) inhabit South Australia. All belong to a southern hemisphere family, the Chelidae, that also occurs in South America. Chelids withdraw the head into the shell by bending the neck sideways; most other turtles bend the neck vertically, pulling it straight back.

The broad-shell and the Macquarie turtles are confined to the main channels of rivers. In South Australia the broad shell is found only along the Murray River, while the Macquarie turtles occurs naturally along the Murray and in billabongs and channels of Cooper’s Creek. Introduced populations exist in the Torrens and other wetland areas of Adelaide.

The common long-necked turtle is much more versatile. It inhabits rivers, creeks lakes and swamps, often using ephemeral water bodies that dry up completely. This species is well able to survive on land for long periods and makes energetic overland movements between water bodies.



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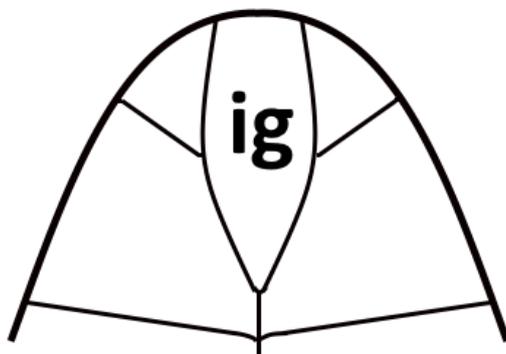
Family Chelidae

1. a. Head and neck less than half the length of the shell; intergular plate reaches the front edge of the plastron (lower shell); plastron much narrower than carapace (see fig. 2b) *Emydura macquarii*
Macquarie River Turtle
- b. Head and neck more than half the length of the shell; intergular plate does not reach the front edge of the plastron (lower shell); plastron as wide as, or much narrower than the carapace. 2

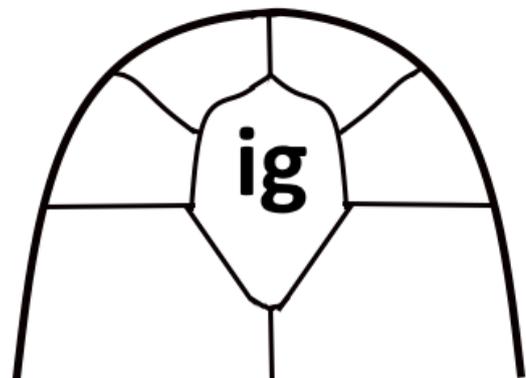


Emydura macquarii

1a. Head chunky, deep; neck relatively short

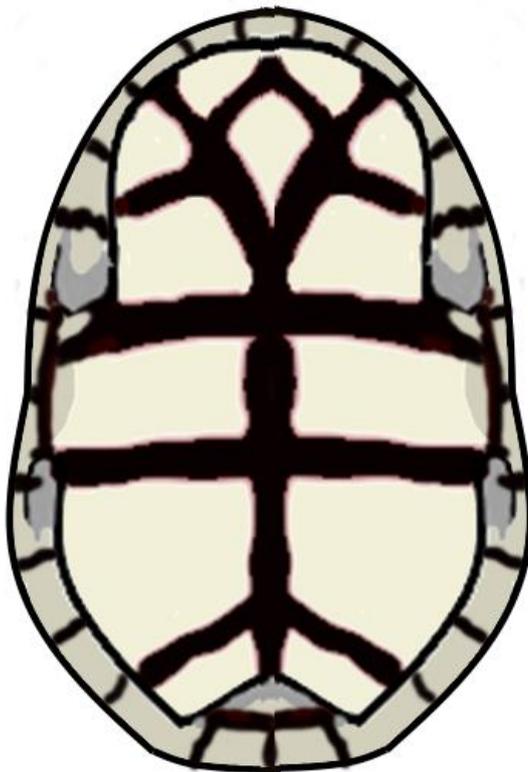


1a. Intergular shield reaches front edge of lower shell (plastron)



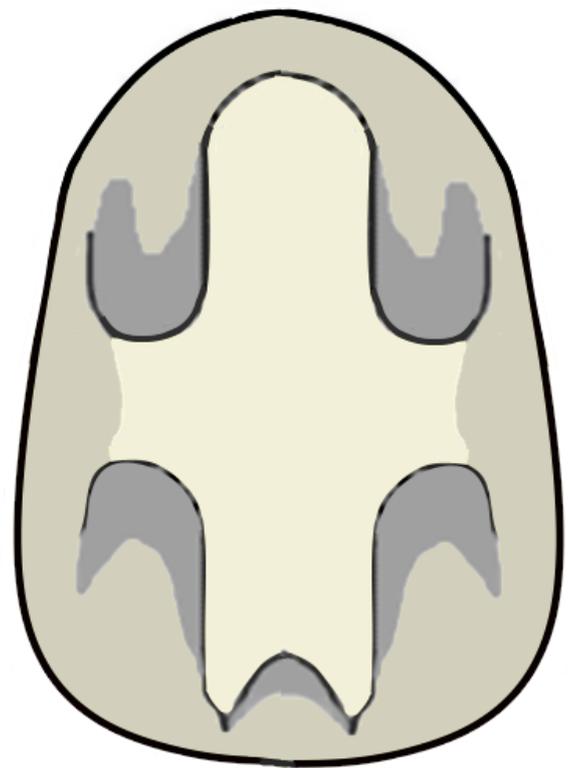
1b. Intergular does not reach front edge of lower shell (plastron)

2. a. Plastron almost as wide as carapace, with strong blackish edges to shell plates (scutes); curled-up sides of shell reveal the underside plating; head relatively short and narrow - distance from eye to the back of the head about three times the distance from eye to nostril ***Chelodina longicollis***
Eastern Long-necked Turtle
- b. Plastron much narrower than carapace; carapace, uniformly creamy white; sides of shell not curled up; head relatively long and flat - distance from eye to the back of the head about six times the distance from eye to nostril . ***Chelodina expansa***
Broad-shelled Turtle



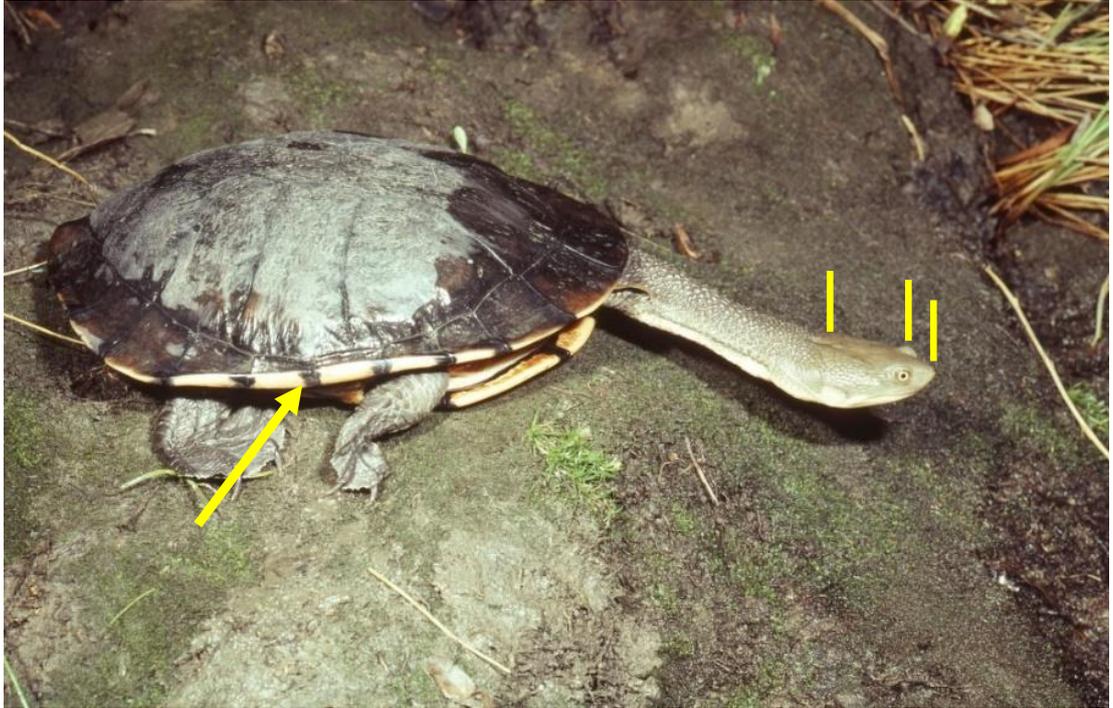
Chelodina longicollis

2a. Plastron almost as wide as carapace; shell plates with dark junctions



Chelodina expansa

2b. Plastron much narrower than carapace; shell plates uniformly pale



Chelodina longicollis

2a. Curled-up shell edges show dark seams between shell plates; head relatively short



Chelodina expansa

2b. Edges of shell not curled up; head relatively long and flat