herpy

TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Painted Turtle

Chrysemys picta

Chrysemys picta is a diurnal, semi-aquatic turtle from North America with red and yellow stripes on the neck, legs and shell margin. The shell reaches 13-25 cm, and the animal can live for many decades. An adult requires a large, filtered tank with several hundred litres of water, a warm basking spot and strong UVB.

Family: Emydidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**13-25 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**300-500 g**
Lifespan	**25-40 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Wetland and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**170 × 70 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**20-30 °C**
Basking spot	**30-40 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-24 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 25-35 cm
Water temperature	**21-27 °C**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects, complete diet, plants, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**4-15 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-5**
Incubation	**72-80 days** at 25-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Keep the animal in an aquarium, a large tank or a closed indoor pond, not in an ordinary enclosure.
TEMPERATURE	The surface of the basking spot should be about 40 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer a couple of hours after the lamps are switched on, and the air above the basking spot 30-35 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The turtle's humidity is the water itself, so the relative humidity of the air is not documented in detail for the species and is not decisive; 50-80 % in the room is ample. What is decisive is the cleanliness of the water.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The water is the animal's living space, so it must be deep, clean and warm. The water depth should be at least equal to the shell length, and 25-35 cm suits adults. The temperature is 24-27 °C (see Temperature).
LIGHTING AND UVB	UVB is a necessity. The species belongs to Ferguson zone 3-4. The UV index at the surface of the basking spot should be about 3.0-4.0, and there may well be areas with a lower UV index, so that the animal can choose.
FEEDING	*C. picta* is omnivorous. In the wild it eats aquatic plants, algae, aquatic insects, crustaceans, snails, small fish and carrion. The young animals are mostly carnivorous, and with age the diet becomes more plant-based.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*C. picta* is diurnal, shy and quick to flee into the water. It is not tame and does not thrive on contact, so it should be handled only when necessary, for example for health checks or cleaning.
NATIVE RANGE	Canada, United States and Mexico.