

Reptiles

Turtles

River Cooters (2) and Pond Slider
Pseudemys concinna; *Trachemys scripta*

“Big Girl, Mark and Stewart”

These aquatic turtles are common to the southeast and the area in and around Lay Lake. They are primarily herbivorous, preferring fruits and veggies to meat.



Box Turtles (male and female)
Terrepenne carolina

“Bob and Beatrice”

Box turtles are land turtles. They have a domed carapace (upper shell) which helps makes it hard for predators to fit them in their mouths. They also have a hinged plastron (lower shell) which allows for them to close up completely in their shells. Males have a brighter body color and red eyes thought to help attract mates. Females are dull in color thought to help them camouflage when put in the vulnerable position of laying eggs.



Gopher Tortoise (male and female)
Gopherus polyphemus

“Tiny and Sandy”

Gopher tortoises are herbivorous land dwelling creatures found in extreme southern parts of Alabama in the Coastal Plain ecosystem. They are an endangered species in parts of the state. The burrows they dig can be more than fifty feet in length. Over 150 animals use the burrows that gopher tortoises dig as shelter for themselves including rattlesnakes, gopher mice, and alligators! It is estimated that Tiny is about 40 years old and Sandy is likely 8 to 10 years old.



Common Snapping Turtle
Chelydra serpentine

“Rosie”

Snapping turtles have extremely powerful mouths and can move, or “snap”, at lightning speed to catch prey. Their diet consists of a mix of greens and meat and they’re most commonly found along river banks in murky, muddy waters. Snapping turtles have a reduced plastron (lower shell) to allow more free movement of their long necks to catch prey. Their nostrils are placed directly on the tip of their face allowing their long necks to serve as a snorkel while they rest on the bottom of shallow waters.



Snakes

Corn Snake
Elaphe guttata

“Serengeti”

A non-venomous species, the corn snake gets its name from its frequent presence in and around corn silos and barns. They are attracted to rodents that feed on the corn and can typically eat 3-4 times as many mice as a barn cat in any year.



Eastern Hognose Snake
Heterodon platirhinos

“Hickory”

Hognose snakes are considered non-venomous, but it should be noted that they actually do have mild venom rated “2” on a scale of 1-50 in strength. They are rear-fanged and feed almost exclusively on toads.

When captured, a toad will fill with air so that it appears larger. A hognose snake can use a “tooth” in the back of its mouth to pop the toad and swallow it down!



Black King Snake
Lampropeltis getula

“King Daddy”

King snakes are extremely beneficial creatures to humans. They are immune to the venom of most venomous snakes and will readily feed on them. They are one of the few natural predators of Copperheads and



Rattlesnakes and provide a great service to us by controlling populations of venomous snakes!

Crocodillians

American Alligator (2) *Alligator mississippiensis*

“Gladys and Buford”

Our alligators are on loan from Gatorland in Orlando, FL. They were born in 2007. When they reach the age of three, we will return them to Gatorland and acquire two new young (grunts) for use in education programs. Alligators were brought to the brink of extinction largely because of habitat loss and the popularity of products made from their hides. Federal protection and huge efforts by state agencies have brought these animals back and their populations are once again thriving in FL and extreme Southern portions of AL, GA, MS, LA, and SC.

