

Species Profile:

Spiny Softshell Turtle

Why did the turtle cross the road? Well, if it's a spiny softshell turtle, that's a trick question because you'll rarely, if ever, see one walking about pavement!

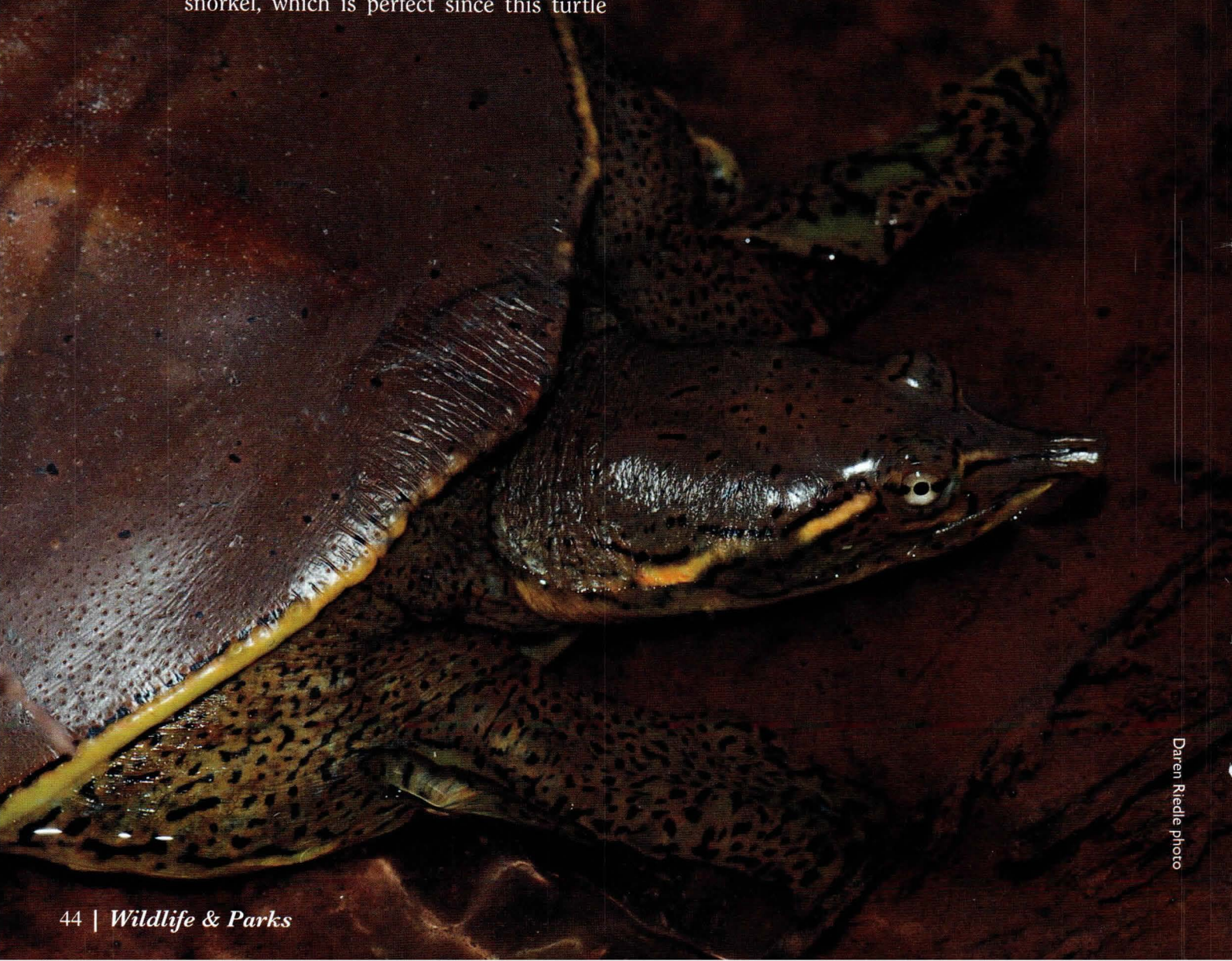
Spiny softshell turtles differ from their hard-shelled kin in that they primarily reside in or around water.

Spiny softshells are somewhat flat in shape, light tan or olive in color, with spotted and streaked legs. And their shell, or carapace, is soft with little bumps on top and dark edging.

The spiny softshell's nose is like a small snorkel, which is perfect since this turtle

likes to frequent sandbars and mud flats. They spend the warmer months catching sun, searching for food and cooling off beneath the mud, and the winter months submerging themselves several inches below the bottom of a pond or lake as they wait for spring.

The long neck of the spiny softshell allows it to lie in wait for its prey and strike from a distance. Their carnivorous palate includes fish, insects and frogs - necessary proteins to fuel their life which can span upwards of 25 years.



Daren Riedle photo