

## **Nature Adventures Module: Softshell turtle laying eggs.**

(Highlighted words are found in the Glossary List)

Todd: Now this is a site you don't get to see every day. This is a female softshell turtle. They are timid animals which generally are not seen on land. But she has a reason for being on shore today. Can you guess what she is doing? She is laying eggs!

Terri: Softshell turtles lay **clutches** of eggs along a sunny sandbar or gravel bank in a flask-shaped cavity that they dig close to water as quickly as possible (usually within an hour). She then lays between 9 and 38 round eggs, which typically hatch around August and September. Clutches can even stay in the ground through the winter and hatch in the spring! Females invest energy into supplying their eggs with nutrients for development but once she deposits them in to the sandy nest, her job as a mother is done! The hatchlings will break out of their shell on their own, and will probably never meet their mother!

Todd: Spiny softshell turtle nests are often destroyed by raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Young softshell turtles are sometimes eaten by raccoons, herons, and fish. They prey on aquatic insects and crustaceans.

Terri: These interesting turtles are important members of the ecosystems where they live. Seeing this softshell turtle lay her eggs was a great experience!