



## Lesson 1: Rhody Reptiles

### Theme

Reptiles are uniquely adapted to survive, and we must understand their behaviors in order to help conserve them.

### Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will learn about reptile characteristics and behaviors, and what the RI DEM Division of Fish & Wildlife is doing to protect reptiles in Rhode Island.

### Corresponding Activities for this Lesson

- Reptile Rumors
- Box Turtle Blitz

### Materials

- Lesson 1 PowerPoint
- Turtle shell
- Snake sheds
- Rhode Island turtle and snake cards
- Reptile true/false cards (information found in Reptile Rumors activity)

### Lesson

**1. Start by asking students what they know about reptiles. Discuss characteristics of reptiles through a Venn-diagram with turtles and snakes.** Students can come up with characteristics to categorize, or use the list provided on the PowerPoint presentation.

- Pass out Rhode Island turtle and snake cards to each table to generate discussion.
- Discuss differences and similarities between the two.
- Discuss how adaptations help reptiles to survive.

**2. Review “Box Turtle Adaptations” slide asking how each characteristic helps box turtles to survive, pass around the box turtle shell.** *Detailed notes can be found in the Lesson 1 PowerPoint.*

**3. Explain that reptiles have strange behavioral adaptations that often cause them to be misunderstood. Ask students why reptiles behave differently than other animals.**

- In groups, have students discuss what they know about reptile behavior.
- Pass out “Reptile Rumor” cards or have students write ideas on a whiteboard.
- Review correct answers, marking each one off as either “TRUE” or “FALSE.”

**4. Ask if anyone has seen a reptile.**

- Collect answers and ask if anyone knows where they go in the winter.
- Review behavioral adaptations of reptiles. *Detailed notes about reptile adaptations and seasonal behaviors are provided in the Lesson 1 PowerPoint.*

**5. Ask students what they think they should do if they see a snake.**

- Explain to students that snakes really just want to be left alone, and that seeing one isn’t cause for panic.

**6. Explain to students that the RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife is working to protect and conserve our native reptiles.**

- Ask students if they think there might be any reptiles that are threatened and need help in Rhode Island.
- Review the RIDEM project to protect State-Endangered Northern diamond-back terrapins, and how the work of citizen scientists has been instrumental in the conservation of this species over the past thirty years. *Detailed notes about the history of terrapins in Rhode Island are included in the Lesson 1 PowerPoint.*
- Discuss how the new “turtle drone” is helping biologists at the RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife find new populations. Show turtle drone video.
- The DFW is also monitoring diamondback terrapins, spotted turtles and box turtles through “mark and recapture” techniques.