

Plastomenus

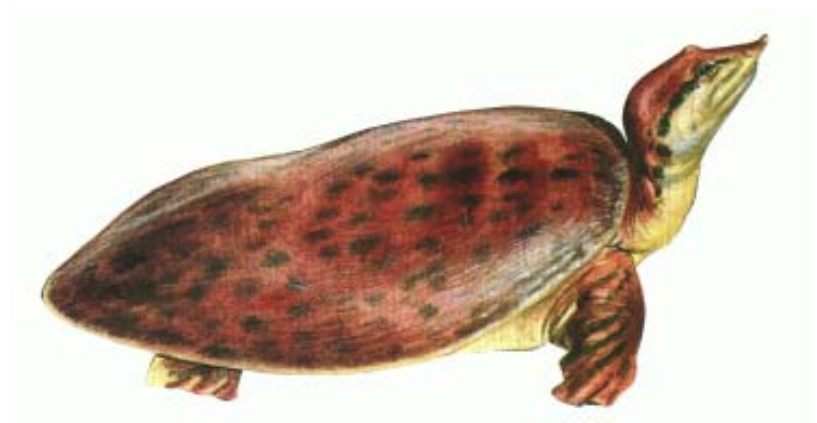
Common Name:
Soft-shelled turtle

Classification:
Class: Reptilia
Order: Chelonia
Family: Trionychidae

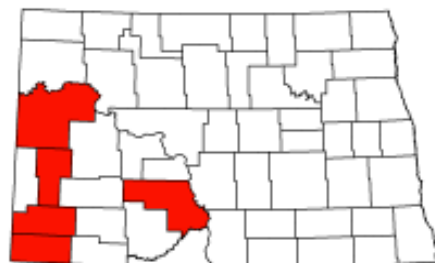
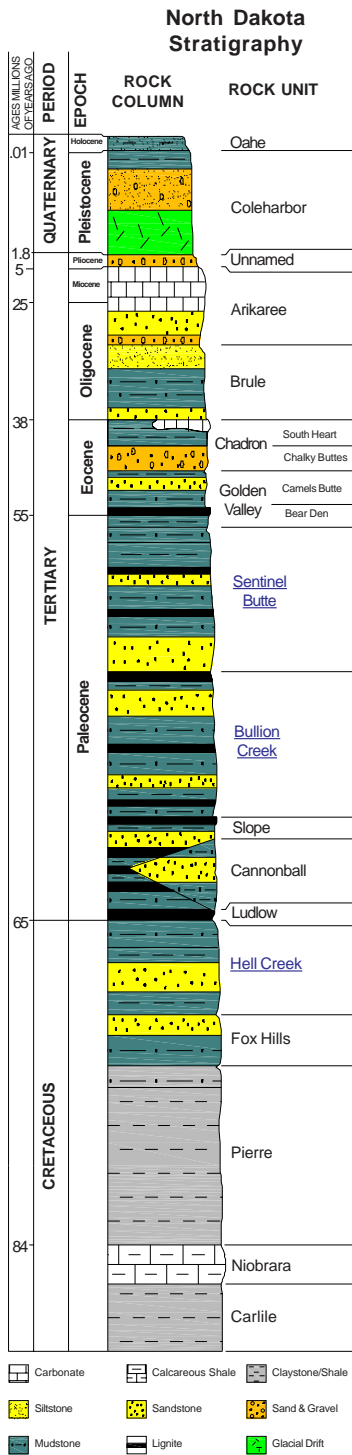


Skeleton (cast) of the soft-shelled turtle *Plastomenus*. [Sentinel Butte](#) Formation. Billings County. Length 535 mm. Collected on United States Forest Service-Dakota Prairie Grasslands administered land. Specimen is on exhibit at the North Dakota Heritage Center, Bismarck. North Dakota State Fossil Collection ND213.1.

Description:
Plastomenus was similar to the soft-shelled turtles that live today. They were up to about 18 inches in length and had a low and rounded shell. Unlike most other turtles, trionychids do not have a true horny covering instead the underlying bony plates are covered with a layer of soft, leathery skin. *Plastomenus* had a long, mobile neck. It was probably omnivorous and could eat plants, insects, mollusks, and even small fish.



Plastomenus. Painting courtesy of Simon and Schuster Publishing Company.



Locations where fossils have been found