

Bone-Crusher Unveiled!

In the Prime of His Life, Senior “Citizen” Debuts at Natural Science Center



(Greensboro, NC) – America and the world was a very different place in 1919. The Treaty of Versailles was signed ending WWI. The League of Nations was founded. The Kelut Volcano in Java erupted killing a stunning 20,000 people. The US Congress approved the 19th Amendment beginning a new era in women’s rights and Prohibition in the US was officially authorized. However, unbeknownst in the annals of history, something very different was quietly taking place in some silent swamp in the southeastern United States, the birth of **Bone-Crusher**.

On December 21, 2011 at 1pm, the Natural Science Center of Greensboro (NSC) will unveil its newest exhibit for its oldest new resident, Bone-Crusher, a 92 year old alligator snapping turtle.

Alligator snappers are the largest freshwater turtles in North America growing up to 250 lbs. with unsubstantiated reports of specimens exceeding 400 lbs. With a spiked shell (averaging two feet long), beaklike jaws, and a thick, scaled tail, this species is often referred to as the "dinosaur of the turtle world." Though exact life expectancy is unknown, it is believed that their lifespan rivals that of giant land tortoises and can exceed 150 years.

For reasons unknown, Bone-Crusher has lived his entire life in captivity. Donated by the David Taylor Zoo of Emporia, Kansas, Bone-Crusher will take up his new and final residence in the former nurse shark exhibit in the NSC’s small, downstairs saltwater aquariums that are being renovated due to the construction of the new Carolina SciQuarium. As his new exhibit will reveal, Bone-Crusher is a true survivor with battle scars to prove it. Holes and indentations in his shell from alligator attacks are clear indicators of the survival-based adaptations of the species.

Beginning December 21, Bone-Crusher will be on display in the NSC’s downstairs aquarium tank during regular Museum hours (9am to 5pm, daily). At the unveiling, there will be special keeper talk.

Here are some more interesting facts about Alligator Snapping Turtles:

- Alligator snappers typically live 80-120 years and can be found primarily in rivers, swamps, and lakes of the southeastern US from Texas to Georgia.
- They differ in appearance from the common snapping turtle by three large ridges with raised plates along its back giving the animal a prehistoric look.
- These giant turtles have a unique hunting technique for food. They have a pink worm-like appendage on the tip of their tongue and while holding their breath for nearly an hour, will lay motionless in the water, mouth wide open, hoping to lure in a fish.
- Snappers have no natural predators other than humans, who capture them for their meat and shells and to sell in the exotic animal trade. A severe reduction in population due to unregulated harvesting and habitat loss has led states to protect them and they are listed as a threatened species.

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The Natural Science Center of Greensboro offers three attractions in one destination: a hands-on science Museum (featuring a Dinosaur Gallery, Herpetarium and touch labs), Animal Discovery Zoological Park (featuring tigers, gibbons, wallabies, meerkats, lemurs and many other unique animals)

and a state-of-the-art OmniSphere Dome Theater (North Carolina's only 40 foot digital dome experience). In early 2013, the NSC will open central Carolina's first "SciQuarium" featuring live sharks, penguins, fishing cats, stingrays and fish. The Natural Science Center is located at 4301 Lawndale Drive in Greensboro and is a 501 (c)3 organization. For more information, visit www.natsci.org.