

# A Turtle Tale

*Story by David Scott and Gay Heagler  
photos by David Scott*

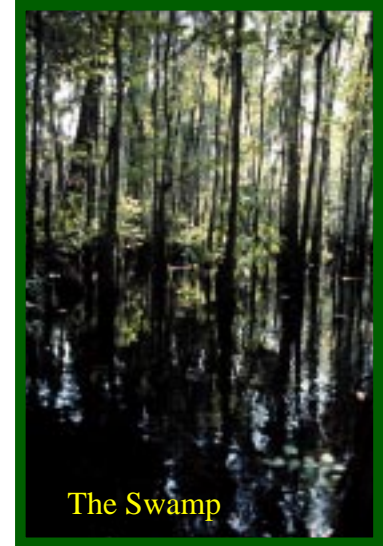
The two friends had not seen each other in a long time. As tiny babies they had lived near each other. But not anymore.

“Jaws” is an old snapping turtle. She lives in a swamp near the Savannah River in South Carolina. She loves her home in the swamp.



Jaws

The swamp is the perfect habitat for her and her relatives. Its deep, slow, dark water provides all kinds of insects and snails and fish to eat.

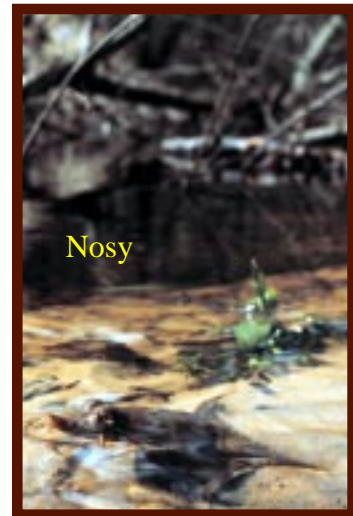


The Swamp

On most days Jaws was very happy. But not today. She missed her friend, and wanted to send a message to him.

As she sat in the mud in the murky water, another turtle swam by—it was “Nosy,” the soft-shelled turtle.

“Why the sad face?” Nosy asked Jaws.



Nosy

“I want to tell a friend something, but he lives so far away,” Jaws replied.



Big Creek

“I’m headed up Big Creek,” Nosy said. “I need to find a home that has more sand. I can take a message.” So Jaws whispered her message to Nosy. Then Nosy swam away, toward the creek that gave the swamp water. And Jaws was happy once again.



Nosy swam against the current for a long way. Finally, at a bend in the creek, he found a nice sandy stream bottom. Nosy decided to stop there. Just then a young boy turtle named “Longnails,” the yellow-bellied slider turtle, crawled out on the creek bank.



“Where you headed?” Nosy called out.



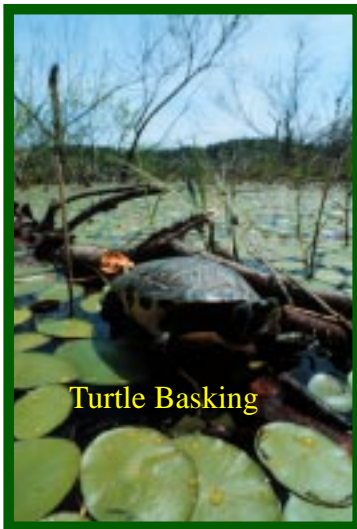
“Up the bank and away from the creek,” Longnails said. I want to go find a new home with more turtles. Maybe a pond with lots of girl turtles.” He grinned.

Nosy continued. “I need a favor. Please carry a message from Jaws to her friend.”

And Longnails agreed, listened to the message, and waved good-bye to Nosy with his claws.

Longnails climbed and climbed and climbed. The hike away from Big Creek seemed to go on and on. Finally he reached the ridge and made it out of the trees. He peered through the old-field grass into the distance. The sky seemed strangely lit, so Longnails walked in that direction.





Soon he arrived at a small pond with many stumps,  
some fallen logs and...lots of turtles basking in the sun!

Longnails was happy, and decided to go no farther. He almost forgot  
about the message from Jaws until he passed "Tiny," the mud turtle.

Tiny was leaving the  
pond and headed  
toward high ground.



"You leaving?" Longnails asked.

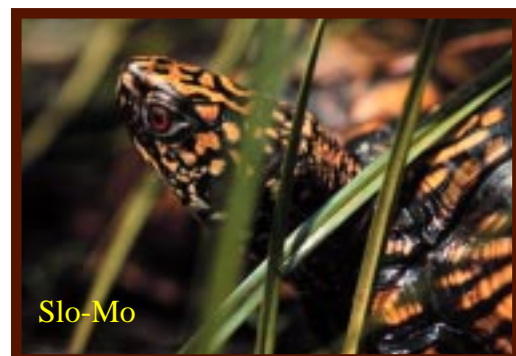
"Yeah," Tiny replied. "I'm headed out to find a nice  
burrow for the winter."

"Say, if you see Slo-Mo, could you give him a message from Jaws?" Longnails asked.



Tiny said "You bet," and got the message. Longnails disappeared into the pond.

Tiny was not far from the water when she noticed  
movement at the edge of the forest. A rustling  
noise came from under the blackberry briars. A  
yellow head poked through the leaves. At last, it  
was "Slo-Mo," the box turtle, out looking for  
berries and mushrooms to eat.



“Hey Slo-Mo!” Tiny yelled. “I have a message for you—all the way from the swamp—from Jaws.

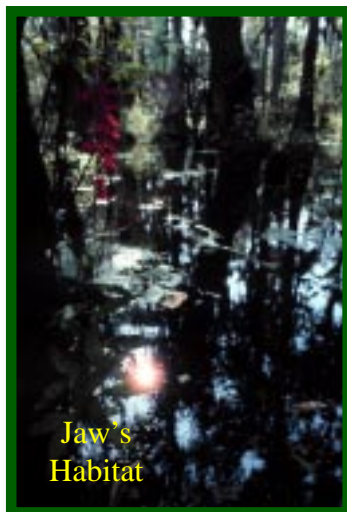
She said to tell you ‘Happy Birthday!’”



Slo-Mo smiled. No one else had remembered.



Slo-Mo had not seen his childhood friend for a long time. Their mothers had built their nests near each other years and years ago. Jaws and Slo-Mo met when they hatched from their eggs.



A short time later Jaws had begun her journey to the swamp, and Slo-Mo had started his trip throughout the forest and field.

“So how old are you?”

Tiny asked.

“I am 40 years old today,” Slo-Mo replied.



Slo-Mo smiled again. It was a happy day, after all.