

Prehistoric Giant Turtle

Early Eocene. 50 million years

USA

Fossil

H:155 x W:139 cm

This giant turtle Axestemys byssinus is an extremely rare specimen in exceptional condition.

Soft-shell turtles belong to a specialised family of turtles called the Trionychidae - a unique group of turtles which lack the hard keratinized shell common to other kinds of turtles. The carapace (upper shell) and plastron (lower shell) of soft shell turtles are covered in soft, leathery skin which is flexible around the edges. Fossil turtles from the Green River Formation are extremely rare. Less than 25 complete Axestemys byssinus have ever been found; they are among the most sought after of all fossils due to their size, beauty and rarity.