



turtle's head?

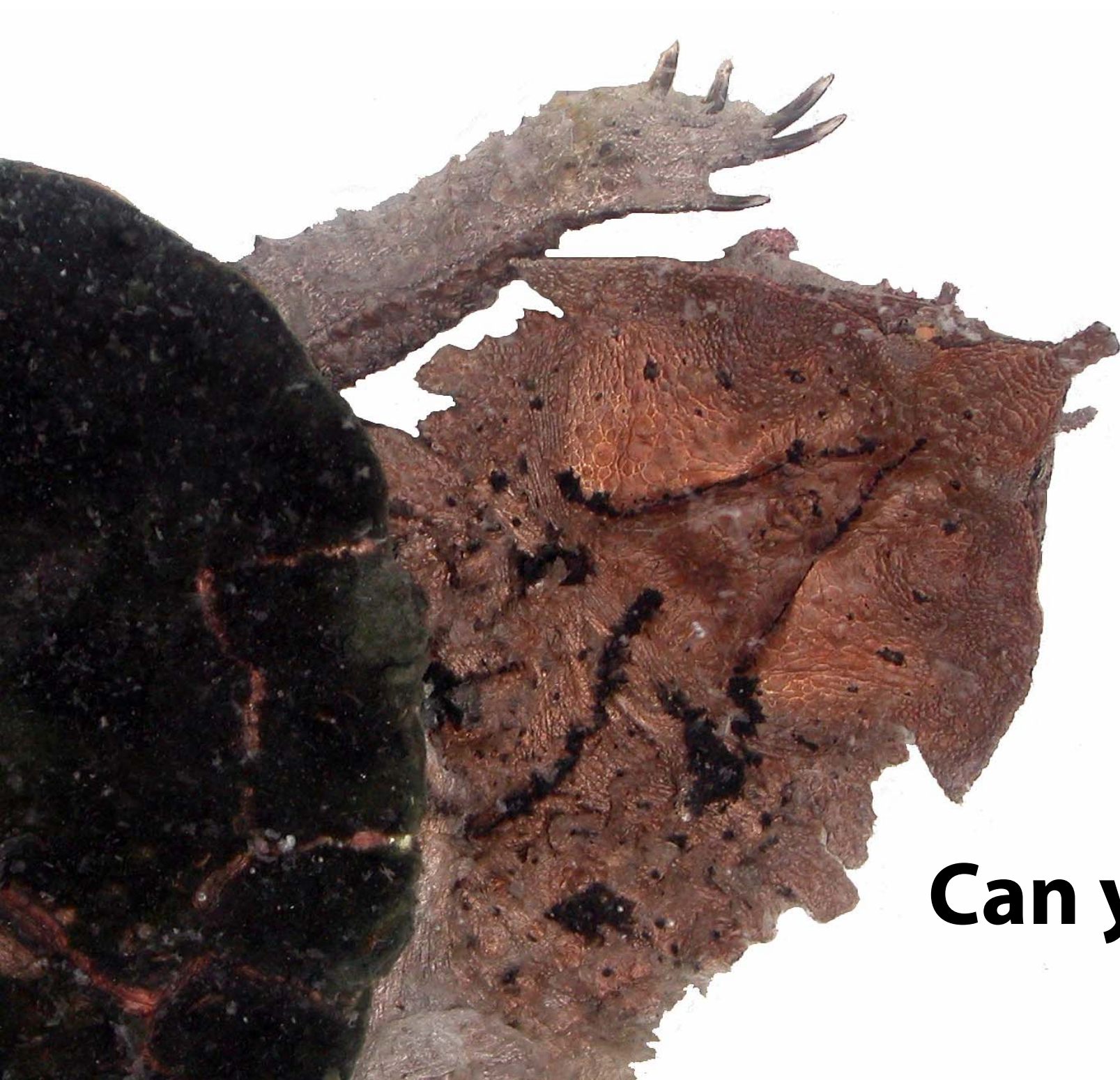
or

dead leaf?

The MATAMATA TURTLE (*Chelys fimbriata*) is found throughout the Amazon basin. This aquatic turtle is a weak swimmer and only surfaces to breathe. It is never seen basking, and rarely swimming or floating. The word *matamata* appears to be of Brazilian origin and means “skin”. The matamata is also known by another name, *la fea*, meaning “the ugly one”. We try to avoid this name so we don't hurt their feelings!



This turtle's bizarre appearance evolved as an adaptation that allows it to ambushing prey. Its bumpy shell, fringes and ridges provide perfect camouflage among leaf litter while waiting for fish to pass. Algae even grow on its shell! Eardrums (***tympana***) allow the turtle to detect vibrations in the water and hear prey approaching. It strikes at prey with its long neck and wide mouth, sucking the prey in and swallowing it.



Can you find our Matamatas?