

Blanding's Turtle

Emydoidea blandingii



Status: **Threatened**

Threats:

- ◆ Road mortality
- ◆ Low nesting success due to predators (raccoons, skunks)
- ◆ Habitat destruction (wetland loss)
- ◆ Pet trade



Photo: Scott Gillingwater



Photo: Scott Gillingwater

Description:

- ◆ Medium sized turtle; shell can be up to 27 cm long
- ◆ Yellow spots or streaks on the carapace
- ◆ Bright yellow chin and throat
- ◆ Protruding eyes
- ◆ Smooth domed shell like a military helmet

Biology:

- ◆ Will travel up to 7 km in search of food or a mate
- ◆ Reach reproductive maturity at 25 years of age
- ◆ Lays 6-11 oval, dull white, hard shelled eggs

Habitat:

- ◆ Found in several types of freshwater environments, including lakes, permanent or temporary pools, slow-flowing streams, marshes and swamps.
- ◆ In general, the species prefers shallow water that is rich in nutrients, organic soil and dense vegetation.
- ◆ Also needs terrestrial environments and will travel over long distances, between different aquatic environments, in order to find suitable sites for basking in the sun and nesting.
- ◆ Remains very loyal to these sites.
- ◆ Nests in dry conifer or mixed hardwood forests, up to 410 m from any body of water. Females also like partially vegetated sites such as fields or roadways. They dig their nest in a variety of loose substrates, including sand, organic soil, gravel and cobblestone.
- ◆ Hibernation occurs from October through April in the soft mud in the bottom of permanent pools that average about one metre in depth, or in slow-flowing streams.

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

Blanding's Turtle

Emydoidea blandingii

STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

Status: **Threatened**



Turtle on the road?
**Here's How
You Can Help:**

Blanding's Turtle on Your Property? **Here's What You Can Do:**

- ◆ Protect nest sites by observing from a distance. Nesting season in Ontario is 2-3 weeks long in May and June; eggs hatch by the end of summer. Female turtles dig their nests and lay their eggs in sandy, well-drained soil.
- ◆ Blanding's turtles often return to the same nesting site year after year so preserve any nesting sites on your property.
- ◆ Don't cover Blanding's turtle nests: they need specific temperatures if hatching is to be successful. Covering the nest could result in cooler temperatures and the eggs might not have time to hatch before the fall freeze.
- ◆ Sit back, relax, and enjoy knowing you have provided suitable habitat for one of Ontario's precious turtles!
- ◆ **See a turtle?** Tell Turtle Tally! If you see an at risk turtle (live or dead) submit your sighting to Ontario Turtle Tally: www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/TurtleTally.asp. You can also submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm. Every turtle sighting you report helps protect Ontario's turtles and the places they live.
- ◆ **Learn more.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.



Photo: Scott Gillingwater



Photo: Leeanne Leduc



Photo: Scott Gillingwater

- ◆ Watch for traffic! Make sure it is safe to pull over and help the turtle without putting yourself at risk.
- ◆ Move the turtle in the direction it's going. If you don't, it will probably turn around and try again.
- ◆ Don't lift a turtle by its tail. Turtles are heavy; you could dislocate vertebrae. Don't drag turtles - they get road rash!
- ◆ A turtle smaller than a dinner plate can be picked up by the shell. Grasp the shell on either side of the tail at 5 and 7 o'clock. If you have gloves, wear them.
- ◆ Larger turtles are more challenging. If possible, toss a towel or blanket over its head. Turtles that can't see you, can't bite you. The turtle can then be picked up in the same way as above.
- ◆ If you can't lift it and have a shovel handy, try gently sliding the shovel under the back end of the turtle. You can then either shovel the turtle onto a second blanket and drag it across the road or slowly push the turtle across the road on the shovel. If using a shovel to move a turtle, keep it very low to the ground in case the turtle moves.
- ◆ Most turtles will pee on you when handled. Hold them away from your body.
- ◆ It is best not to move a turtle from the general area where it is attempting to cross the road. Turtles do make overland movements away from wetlands; however, if the area is highly developed or the risk of the turtle moving onto another road is high, then moving the turtle to the nearest wetland is probably the best option.
- ◆ Wash your hands after handling a turtle.