

BLANDING'S TURTLE

Emydoidea blandingii



Physical characteristics



The Blanding's turtle has a high-domed black upper shell with yellow speckles that can be 15 to 28 cm long. It can be confused with the painted turtle when the two species are similar in size. However, the best way to identify the Blanding's turtle is by its bright yellow throat and underside of the neck.

Diet



This turtle species is primarily carnivorous and has a varied diet. It eats an abundance of crayfish, insects, mollusks, fish, frogs, and carrion, as well as a few plants to round out its meals.

Habitat



The Blanding's turtle spends much of its time in the water. It prefers wetlands, vegetated ponds, and beaver ponds. It nests in mainly open, sunny spots in sandy, well-drained soil, such as gravel roads and fields which can be up to several hundred meters away from aquatic zones. According to sources, its presence in Quebec is limited almost exclusively to the southwestern Outaouais region.



Periods of vulnerability



- The nesting period is from late May to early July.
- Egg incubation lasts between 55 and 75 days. Most newborns emerge from the nest between late August and early September. Depending on the year, this period can extend into early October.
- This species hibernates in the water from October to April, depending on weather conditions.

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Threats



- The reduced number of wetlands and suitable riparian buffer areas across the landscape.
- Roads and vehicles can cause habitat fragmentation, mortality of females on their way to egg-laying sites, and mortality of hatchlings emerging from their nests.
- Slow population growth, as it takes between 15 and 22 years for a turtle to reach sexual maturity, reproduce, and lay eggs.

Sustainable practices



- Create wide riparian buffers or wetlands:
 - Leave structures such as dead wood in place, where Blanding's turtles love to bask in the sun.
 - Where possible, cohabiting with beavers and the ponds they create will benefit the Blanding's turtle.
- Leave sand and gravel banks along watercourses in their natural state, as they are essential for egg-laying and therefore vital for the species' reproduction.
- Locate nests and identify them with small flags or wooden stakes to avoid damaging or destroying nests and eggs when using farm machinery, for example.
- Slow down and be vigilant when driving on roads near Blanding's turtle habitats, especially in June.

- As of 2023, **endangered** species listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*
- Recovery strategy: wildlife-species.azure.com/species-risk-registry/virtual_sara/files/plans/rs_blandings_turtle_e_final.pdf

Sources

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