

Blanding's Turtle

Emydoidea blandingii

STATUS

Endangered 

Endangered 

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Species Description

The Blanding's Turtle has a high-domed, helmet shaped and sized shell that is dark grey when dry and black with yellowish flecks when wet. It has a long neck and bright yellow chin and throat. Hatchlings are dark grey with a pale yellow throat, and toonie-sized. Full-grown adults are about 18-25 cm in length.

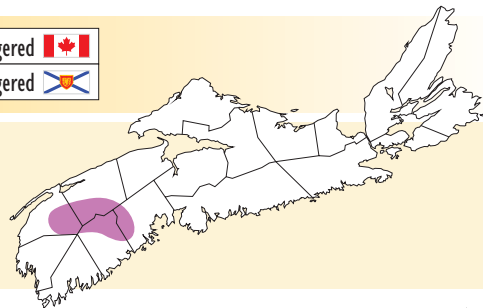


carapace (back):
dark grey;
yellowish flecks



plastron (belly):
yellowish; big
black blotches

A small number are found in the interior of Nova Scotia. Sightings are reported throughout southwest Nova Scotia.



Habitat

Blanding's Turtles are found in freshwater wetlands and lakes (still-water streams, marshes, swamps, bogs, vernal pools, and coves). They occur in dark, slow-moving waters, with muddy bottoms and dense aquatic vegetation, including sedges, Sphagnum, Sweetgale, Cow-lily, and Pickerel Weed. Females lay their eggs in exposed, gravelly or sandy areas in June and can travel multiple kilometres over land to reach nesting areas.



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South facing nesting beach



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Summer wetland habitat

Blanding's Turtles are found in lakes and wetlands. Watch out for them on the roads, especially in June and July when females are up laying their eggs.

Interesting Points

- Hatchlings can walk over 100 meters per day and are able to survive freezing for short periods of time.
- Juveniles do not mature until their early 20s, and individuals are believed to live longer than 80 years!
- They absorb oxygen through their skin in the winter.
- Females often return to nest in the same place each year.



Lend a helping hand!

Turtles are often encountered on the road in May and June during the nesting season. If it is safe, move them off the road in the same direction they were headed. Do not pick them up by their tails because this can cause serious harm. Painted, Blanding's and Wood Turtles can be picked up by securely holding them with a grip on both the top and bottom of the shell. Snapping Turtles require more caution and training, but can be picked up securely at the back of their shell. There are a number of safe handling methods that can be learned by visiting YouTube to watch Toronto Zoo's video titled "How to help a Snapping Turtle Cross the Road."



Watch for Blanding's on the road when you see these signs

Similar Species

Refer to page 58 to view descriptions and photos of the four species of freshwater turtles found in Nova Scotia: Painted Turtle, Blanding's Turtle, Wood Turtle and Snapping Turtle.



Blanding's Turtle bright yellow throat

Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss and degradation (cottage development, roads, forestry practices).
- Changes in habitat function (hydroelectric dams, invasive fish).
- Human-caused mortality from vehicles.
- Predation of nests and hatchlings.
- Illegal removal from the wild.

How You Can Help

Learn how to recognize Blanding's Turtles and report sightings. If you see a turtle, observe and appreciate but do not disturb. Get involved with monitoring and protection efforts and learn how you can make a difference. Keep your yard free of food and attractants so that predator populations are not unnaturally elevated.



Volunteers weighting and measuring hatchlings



Radio tracking a Blanding's Turtle

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Parks Canada (Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site) (902) 682-2770

Info: www.speciesatrisk.ca/blandings, www.sararegistry.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings

Stewardship: Kejimikujik: volunteer.keji@pc.gc.ca, MTRI: info@merseytobeatic.ca