

Wood Turtle

Glyptemys insculpta

STATUS

Threatened 

Threatened 

59



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Species Description

The Wood Turtle has a bumpy, sculpted shell that is dark grey to brown, with orange markings when wet. Its throat, tail, and limb undersides are orange-red. Hatchlings are light brown and toonie-sized, and adults are about 16-21 cm long.

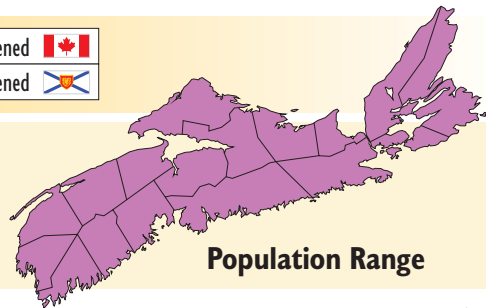


carapace (back):
dark grey; orange
markings when wet



plastron (belly):
yellowish; small
black blotches

Low numbers found
throughout much of
Nova Scotia.



Population Range

Habitat

Found in clear, moderately moving rivers and tributaries in forests or flood plains. Also occurs in terrestrial habitats including riparian areas with dense low growing vegetation, forests, and hay or other agricultural fields. Females lay their eggs in sandy bars along rivers and other gravel areas (driveways, roadsides, borrow pits) in June.



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Wood Turtles are more terrestrial than other turtle species but are typically not found more than a few hundred metres away from water.

Interesting Points

- For the first 15 years, age is determined by counting annuli (growth rings) on the plastron.
- Wood Turtles eat slugs, insects, green plants, grasses, mushrooms, and berries.



Learn more about how you can help this species by searching “Protecting and Conserving Wood Turtles: A Stewardship Plan for Nova Scotia” in your internet browser.



Nesting female



Eating a mushroom



Painted Turtle

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.

Threats to Survival

- Mortality from vehicles and agricultural machinery.
- Illegal collection.
- Habitat loss and degradation (increasing development along rivers, water course alteration, and farm expansion).
- Disturbance due to recreational activities in river and riparian areas.
- Nest predation.

How You Can Help

Keep your eyes open for turtles on the road and drive carefully at all times. Report your sightings! Create or maintain natural buffers along watercourses and drive OHVs on designated trails only. Farmers can raise agricultural machinery blades to a height of 10 cm to prevent injury to turtles. Do not remove turtles from their natural habitat or keep as wild pets; both of these actions are illegal in Nova Scotia.



Wood turtle in an agricultural field



Wood turtle research

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091

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

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

Stewardship: Clean Annapolis River Project: www.annapolisriver.ca, (902) 532-7533