BLANDING'S TURTLE



Species at Risk

In Canada, the Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) is found in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia population is endangered and at risk of being extirpated from the area. The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence population of Blanding's turtles, which includes the Ontario population, is threatened and is at risk of becoming endangered.

The Blanding's turtle is a medium, slow growing turtle that has a dark coloured, high-domed shell with random light brown, green or yellow irregular spots. The top of the head and limbs are brownish in colour. The bright yellow chin and neck, and hinged lower shell can easily identify the Blanding's turtle. Blanding's turtles can close their shell completely to protect themselves from predators.

In Ontario, the Blanding's turtle prefers wetland habitat that contains fresh, shallow, open or vegetated water features. During the winter months the Blanding's turtle will hibernate partially buried in the substrate on the bottom of pools or slow moving streams. Female Blanding's turtles like to choose nesting locations in relatively open areas, such as fields or disturbed habitats such as roadways.

Threats include loss of open wetland habitat caused by human activities such as drainage of wetlands, urbanization, illegal pet trade and excessive predation of the nests by natural predators including raccoons, skunks and coyotes. The Blanding's turtle has also been declining in numbers because of pollution and agricultural activities. Adult female Blanding's turtles suffer high road mortality due to the locations they select as nesting sites. Vehicles run over the adult females, killing the female and her eggs; thus having a long-term impact on the population.

It is illegal to search for, harass or capture a species at risk or destroy their habitat. Picture courtesy of Rob Tervo

References: CÓSEWIC 2005. COSEWIC assessment and update status report on the Blanding's Turtle Emydoidea blandingii in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. viii + 40 pp.













