



SPOTTED TURTLE

Species at Risk

In Canada, the Spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) is an endangered species and is at risk of no longer existing in Canada. This turtle is found in two provinces, Ontario and Quebec. Unfortunately, Spotted turtle numbers are declining.

This turtle is a small, slow growing turtle that has a black shell with yellow spots. The top of the head and limbs have yellow to orange spots. The undersides of the limbs are orange in colour. Irregular shaped orange marks can be found on the head near the ears.

Spotted turtles prefer early successional wetland habitat with open water features including fresh, slow moving, shallow water that is not polluted. Wetland areas such as ponds, fens, bogs, marshes and vernal pools are choice locations for the Spotted turtle to live. Some adult turtles live over 30 years, however; it takes 11 to 15 years before they can reproduce. Females lay 2 to 6 eggs and most hatched turtles do not survive their first year. This species must move about its habitat to find mates, hide from predators, nest, hibernate and thermoregulate. During the summer months when the temperatures are the highest they bury themselves in the leaf litter and remain there for days or weeks at a time.

Threats include loss of open wetland habitat caused by human activities such as drainage of wetlands and loss of beaver activity (wetland makers). Other threats include illegal pet trade, predation, road mortality, pollution and impacts from farm machinery.

It is illegal to search for, harass or capture a species at risk or destroy their habitat.

Picture courtesy of Rob Tervo

References: COSEWIC Status Report on the Spotted Turtle in Canada, 2004

