

Natural. Valued. Protected.

Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*)

The Blanding's Turtle is a medium-sized turtle easily identified by its bright yellow throat and chin. Unlike most Ontario turtles that have wide, flatter shells, the Blanding's Turtle has a domed shell that resembles an army helmet. Its shell is black to brown with yellow flecks and streaks and can reach 27 centimetres long. Its head and limbs are black-grey and the bottom shell is rich yellow.

Habitat

Blanding's Turtles live in shallow water, usually in large wetlands and shallow lakes with lots of water plants. It is not unusual, though, to find them hundreds of metres from the nearest water body, especially while they are searching for a mate or traveling to a nesting site. Blanding's Turtles hibernate in the mud at the bottom of permanent water bodies from late October until the end of April.

Range

The Blanding's Turtle is found in and around the Great Lakes Basin, with isolated populations elsewhere in the United States and Canada. In Canada, the Blanding's Turtle is separated into the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence population and the Nova Scotia population. Blanding's Turtles can be found throughout southern, central and eastern Ontario.

Threats

The most significant threats to the Blanding's Turtle are loss or fragmenting of habitat, motor vehicles, and raccoons and foxes that prey on eggs. Illegal collection for the pet trade is also a serious threat. Blanding's Turtles are slow breeders – they don't start to lay eggs until they are in their teens or twenties – so adult deaths of breeding age adults can have major impacts on the species.

Protection

The Blanding's Turtle is listed as threatened and protected under Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*.

For more information on legislation that helps protect Ontario's species at risk visit ontario.ca/speciesatrisk.



Photo credit: Michael Oldham

Did you know?

The size of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Blanding's Turtle population is impossible to estimate accurately, as only limited data are available.

It can take a female Blanding's Turtle up to 25 years to mature. This long-lived species can survive in the wild for more than 75 years.

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Provincial Status: Threatened

What You Can Do to Help the Blanding’s Turtle

- If you spot a Blanding’s Turtle you can report your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre. Photographs with specific locations or mapping coordinates are always helpful! nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca
- Never buy native species of turtles or any turtles that have been caught in the wild. If you see native species of turtles for sale in a pet store or food market, please contact the Ministry of Natural Resources.
- As with all wildlife, don’t disturb nests, young or adults. Be respectful and observe from a distance.
- Report any illegal activity related to plants and wildlife to 1-877-TIPS-MNR (847-7667).
- As with many other rare plants and animals, the Blanding’s Turtle is at risk due to the loss of wetland habitat. You can help by protecting any wetlands and surrounding natural vegetation on your property.

- Every year, turtles all over the province must cross busy roads to get to their nesting sites. Female Blanding’s Turtles sometimes mistake gravel shoulders of roads as good nesting sites! Watch for turtles on the roads, especially between May and October.
- Volunteer with your local nature club, stewardship council or provincial park to participate in surveys or stewardship work focused on species at risk. www.ontariostewardship.org
- Visit the Toronto Zoo Adopt-a-Pond website to learn more about Ontario’s rare turtles, their habitat and related conservation initiatives. www.torontozoo.com/Adoptapond
- Register with the Herpetofaunal Atlas, a program to improve our knowledge of Ontario's reptiles and amphibians, to receive e-mail newsletters, event notifications, and other updates. www.ontarionature.org/herpetofaunal_atlas.html

Did you know?

Unlike other Ontario turtles, the bottom shell is hinged so that some Blanding’s Turtles can completely close their shell after pulling in their head and feet.

The Blanding’s Turtle is a poor swimmer and normally walks along the lake bottom in search of food – aquatic insects, crustaceans, molluscs and vegetation.

For additional information:

Visit the species at risk website at ontario.ca/speciesatrisk
 Contact your MNR district office
 Contact the Natural Resources Information Centre
 1-800-667-1940
 TTY 1-866-686-6072
mnr.nric.mnr@ontario.ca
ontario.ca/mnr



Photo credit: Allen Woodliffe