

Monitoring Turtles at Nygren Wetland Preserve

India John '12, Beloit College Sustainability Fellows Program
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Painted Turtle^[1,2]
Chrysemys picta



Midland Painted Turtle Photo by: India John



Plastron (bottom of shell) of Midland Painted Turtle
Photo by Courtney Schultz

Two subspecies in Wisconsin:

Midland Painted (*Chrysemys picta marginata*)

Western Painted (*Chrysemys picta bellii*).

Size: 4-8 inch carapace

Habitat: Marshes and ponds, with dense aquatic vegetation

Temperament: Docile

Status: Common; the Western Painted is the most abundant turtle in Wisconsin.



Plastron of a Western Painted Turtle
Photo by India John

Snapping Turtle^[1,2]
Chelydra serpentina



Common Snapping turtle Photo by India John

Size: 8-16 inch carapace; largest species of turtle in Wisconsin.

Habitat: Ponds, lakes, and backwaters of rivers

Temperament: Vicious biting habit when found on land

Status: Common but declining



India John with Common Snapping Turtle
Photo by Courtney Schultz

Turtle Monitoring

- Four traps made by volunteers set throughout the preserve
- Traps were checked 3-4 times a week
- Traps were moved frequently throughout the property
- Captured turtles were:
 - weighed
 - measured (plastron and carapace length and width)
 - notched (Painted Turtles only)
 - released



Interns India John and Scott Kruger making turtle traps
Photo by Courtney Schultz

Turtle Notching

Marked individual turtles by notching the scutes on their carapace (Painted Turtles only). This turtle is sporting 2 rectangular notches, one each on its first and second scutes.



Notched Painted Turtle
Photo by India John



Blanding's Turtle in Boone County
Photo by Courtney Schultz

Blanding's Turtle^[1,2]
Emydoidea blandingii

Size: 6-10 inch carapace

Habitat: Shallow marshy areas with abundant submerged vegetation; semi-terrestrial

Temperament: Docile and shy

Status: State Threatened Species, despite reported sightings, no Blanding's turtles have been captured or recorded at Nygren.

Softshell Turtle^[1,2]
Apalone



Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle
Photo by Greg Keilback



Carapace (top of shell) of a Smooth Softshell turtle
Photo by India John

Two species: Eastern Spiny Softshell (*Apalone spinifera*),

Smooth Softshell (*Apalone muticus*)

Size: Spiny - carapace: fem. 7 - 18 in., m. 5 - 9.5 in.

Smooth - carapace: fem. 6.5 - 13.5 in., m. 4.5 - 7 in.

Habitat: Lakes and rivers with sandy or muddy bottoms to burrow in

Temperament: Spiny is more aggressive than the Smooth

Status: Spiny - Common but declining
Smooth - Special concern



Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle
Photo by Courtney Schultz

References

1. Wisconsin. Department of Natural Resources. Bureau of Endangered Resources. *Turtles and Lizards of Wisconsin*. By Rebecca Christoffel, Robert Hay, and Megan Monroe. Madison, 2002. Print. Ser. 104.
2. Wisconsin. Department of Natural Resources. Bureau of Endangered Resources. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Web. 1 July 2010. <<http://www.uncledavesenterprise.com/file/wisconsin/TURTLES%20OF%20WISCONSIN.pdf>>.

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