

WOOD TURTLE



A conservation stamp issued to celebrate the wood turtle in Quebec.

Scientific Name:	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Testudines
Family:	Emydidae
Genus:	Glyptemys
Species:	insculpta

Glyptemys insculpta
klemmys = tortoise
insculptus = etched or carved
(in reference to the rough lines on the carapace)

Description

- Adults range in carapace length from 14-20 cm;
- The rough, heavily sculptured appearance of the carapace is due to the concentric growth rings located on each scute. This gives each scute a somewhat flattened pyramidal shape;
- Has serrated marginal scutes and low central keels;
- Carapace is brown to greyish-brown to yellow with black vermiculations and flecks;
- The plastron is not hinged. It is yellow with a black blotch at the rear outer corner of each scute. There is a V-shaped notch at the tail;
- The plastron is flat in females and concave in males, which helps in reproduction;
- The head and upper limbs are black. The neck, lower limbs and the remaining skin vary in colour between regions, and shows some regional variation, with yellow to yellow-orange predominant in the western (Great Lakes) area, and orange to reddish skin colour characterizing eastern populations.

Feeding

- Omnivorous;
- They feed mostly on terrestrial plants, mushrooms, insects and worms.

Breeding

- Wood turtles take 18 years or more to reach maturity;
- Some females may not breed every year;
- Have an elaborate and aggressive mating ritual involving a mating dance and sometimes whistling calls;
- Nesting begins in June, occurs in upland areas or sandy areas near water;

- Females lay 4-13 white, oval, thin-shelled eggs;
- Hatchlings emerge in the fall and are 3-4 cm in length. They are more aquatic at this stage of their lives and also more secretive;
- The egg's temperature in the nest does not determine hatchling gender.

Habitat

Wood turtles, as the name implies, are Canada's most terrestrial turtle. They are usually found in areas near soft-bottomed, moving water such as streams, creeks and rivers. Although described as a woodland species, wood turtles appear to thrive in a mosaic habitat of *riparian* woods, shrub or berry thickets, swamps, and open, grassy areas. They need sparsely vegetated patches, preferably with moist sand substrate, for nesting.

Distribution



- *Canada*: Found throughout Nova Scotia west to southern Ontario;
- *USA*: Found in the Great Lakes region. Range extends from Minnesota east to Virginia.

Interesting Facts and Behaviour

- Considered a highly intelligent species of turtle;
- Some individuals learn to stomp their feet on the ground which causes earthworms to surface.

Status

The wood turtle is designated as a vulnerable species provincially in Ontario. It was designated as a species of special concern by **COSEWIC** in 1996.

Conservation Concerns

- Often kept as pets. Illegal collection impacts on populations;
- High nest predation;
- Isolated populations;
- Traffic mortalities.

THE ONTARIO TURTLES

Use this page to compare and contrast all the Ontario turtles, and to recognize their differences and similarities:



Common Musk Turtle
Sternotherus odoratus



Midland Painted Turtle
Chrysemys picta marginata



Western Painted Turtle
Chrysemys picta bellii



Spotted Turtle
Clemmys guttata



Wood Turtle
Glyptemys insculpta



Blanding's Turtle
Emys (Emydoidea) blandingii



Common Snapping Turtle
Chelydra serpentina serpentina



Northern Map Turtle
Graptemys geographica geographica

Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle
Apalone spinifera spinifera

