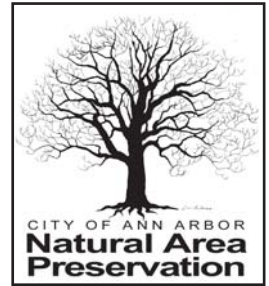


**Natural Area Preservation**

City of Ann Arbor  
 1831 Traver Road  
 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105  
 Phone: 734•794•6627 Fax: 734•997•1072  
 E-mail: nap@a2gov.org  
 Web site: www.a2gov.org/nap



# TURTLES OF MICHIGAN

**Background**

Turtles are reptiles, belonging to the same class as lizards, snakes, and crocodiles. They are lung-breathing, vertebrate animals with dry scales on their skin, claws on their feet, and shells covering most of their body. Turtles live in wetlands, lakes, forests, and even retention ponds, but can travel great distances, often over roads and through neighborhoods, to find mating and nesting sites. Michigan’s ten turtle species lay their eggs on land in covered holes dug by the female, then leave them to hatch on their own.

Turtles are an important midlevel part of the food web, meaning they hunt and are hunted. Their eggs are often a source of food for raccoons and other wildlife. Because of this predation, most urban turtle populations have few juveniles. However, once they are mature, turtles are some of the longest-lived animals. Most Michigan turtles can live for several decades, while some—like the Blanding’s turtle—can live to be 70 years old!

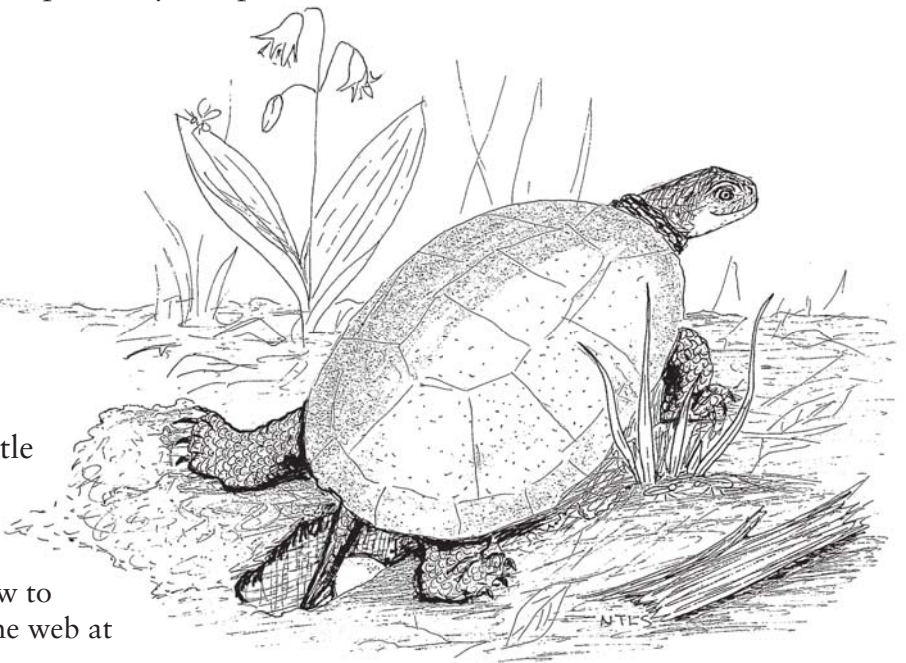
**How Can They Be Identified?**

When you see a turtle in the wild, several characteristics can help you identify it. These characteristics include the shape of the carapace (the top of the shell), the shape of the turtle’s mouth, and most importantly, the pattern of colors on the turtle’s face, neck, feet, and tail.

**Michigan’s Turtles**

- Blanding’s Turtle
- Common Map Turtle
- Common Musk Turtle
- Eastern Box Turtle
- Midland Painted Turtle
- Red-eared Slider
- Eastern Spiny Softshell
- Spotted Turtle
- Common Snapping Turtle
- Wood Turtle

For more information about these species and how to identify them, visit us on the web at [a2gov.org/NAPturtles](http://a2gov.org/NAPturtles).



*Blanding’s turtle laying eggs*

*The mission of Natural Area Preservation is to protect and restore Ann Arbor’s natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.*

# FACT SHEET

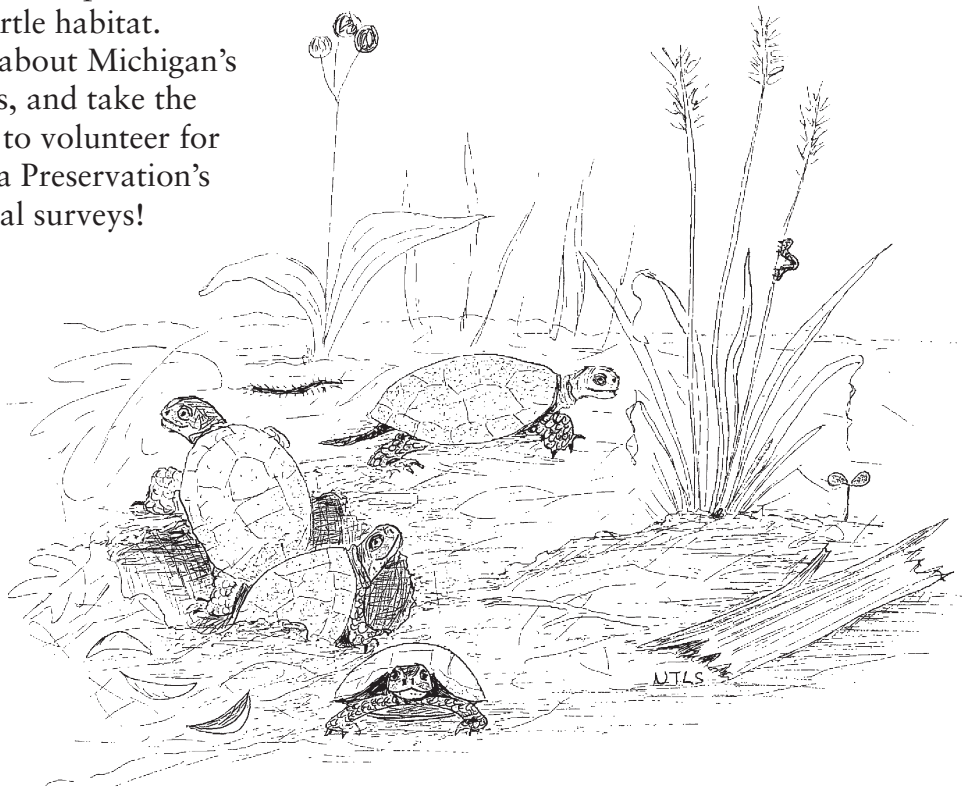
## TURTLES OF MICHIGAN

### Why Are Turtles Important?

Turtles, along with other reptiles and amphibians, act as environmental indicators. Their presence and abundance, or their absence, can tell us about habitat quality. Turtle populations face serious problems as a result of habitat loss due to development, collection, habitat fragmentation, road collisions, poor water quality, and increased predation by raccoons, opossums, and other urban animals. It is important that we preserve these unique animals, both for our enjoyment and for the role they play in our environment.

### What Can We Do to Protect Turtles?

- Be alert for turtles crossing the road. If it is safe to do so, stop and help the turtle cross the road in the direction that it was heading. If you must handle it, do so with clean hands to protect the turtle, and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards to protect yourself from salmonellosis.
- Discourage raccoon and opossum over-population by keeping your garbage and compost covered. These turtle predators can devastate local turtle populations if left unchecked.
- If your property has lakes or wetlands, leave undeveloped corridors and buffers around them for the turtles to move and lay their eggs safely.
- Never buy a wild caught turtle for a pet, trap a wild turtle, or release a pet turtle into the wild.
- Protect turtle nests from predators. Call NAP for information on how to do this.
- Avoid mowing fields that support turtle nesting from mid-May through late June.
- Support efforts to protect wetlands and other turtle habitat.
- Learn more about Michigan's native turtles, and take the opportunity to volunteer for Natural Area Preservation's herpetological surveys!



*Blanding's turtle hatchlings*