

## Blanding's Turtle Education and Encounter plan— NYS DEC issued

This project site is located in an area of potential Blanding's turtle use. Blanding's turtles use a wide range of habitats, including various types of wetlands and uplands and can move 1.3km (0.81 miles) from wetlands in which they overwinter. They are particularly active on the landscape between April 15<sup>th</sup> to October 14<sup>th</sup>. To avoid the species in its active season, plan activities from October 15th to April 14th in any given year. This document is intended to minimize impacts to Blanding's turtles that may be encountered during otherwise lawful activities and be used in accordance with the Department's Permits and jurisdictional response letters for the above referenced project and all other species take avoidance measures. This information should be provided to workers or occupants at the proposed location.

The Blanding's turtle is listed as "Threatened" on the New York State Endangered Species List.

- As a listed species, the Blanding's turtle is protected under the New York State Environmental Conservation Law.
- As provided by the law, it is illegal for any person to approach, touch, move, threaten, harass, disturb, injure, or kill a Blanding's turtle. It is also illegal to take import, transport, possess, or sell any Blanding's turtle, its skin, or other parts, except under a permit or license from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).
- A violation of the Environmental Conservation Law is punishable by both criminal and civil penalties.
- The Blanding's turtle, or other species of turtle, may be encountered along roads, near homes and yards, in work sites, operating facilities and in undeveloped areas. If encountered, observe, but do not attempt to touch, disturb, injure, or collect the turtle.
- Check under cars, or in front of equipment, or along barrier or silt fences for turtles before taking actions. If a turtle is seen in a work area, stop all work immediately.
- Contact the site manager, or supervisor, in charge and delay work in the area until the turtle has moved safely from the area. Allow the turtle to continue on its way.
- If the turtle does not move out of harm's way on its own, and unless a qualified Blanding's turtle monitor licensed in New York State to handle and relocate the species has been retained who will promptly arrange for the turtle to be moved, please contact the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Region 3 Bureau of Wildlife at 845-256-3098 for information regarding next steps and moving the species in accordance with New York State Law.
- If the turtle is found in the roadway (or in immediate danger), it can be moved out of harm's way to the side of the road, or work site, in the direction it is heading (ECL 11-0919). Do not move the turtle large distances or take possession of the turtle.
- Please report any encounters within 24 hours at 845-256-3098 and [Wildlife.R3@dec.ny.gov](mailto:Wildlife.R3@dec.ny.gov). Please provide the location, the project name, any photos take and explanation of the encounter.



**ALL NATIVE TURTLES ARE PROTECTED.**

**LEAVE TURTLES IN THE WILD.**

**HELP PREVENT ILLEGAL COLLECTION OF NATIVE TURTLES BY  
PROTECTING TURTLE LOCATION INFORMATION**

*Do not share location information or post locations of protected turtles  
online.*

### Accompanying handouts:

Backyard Turtle Conservation Recommendations for Landowners & Residents, 2009, Hudsonia Ltd.

NYS DEC Blanding's Turtle Fact Sheet. 2020 <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7166.html>

Turtles of New York PDF. [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/turtles2.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/turtles2.pdf)



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### **Species description**

*The Blanding's turtle is a medium sized turtle with an average shell length of approximately seven to ten inches. A distinguishing feature of this turtle is the bright yellow chin and throat. The upper shell, is domed, but slightly flattened along the midline, and is oblong when viewed from above. The carapace is speckled with numerous yellow or light-colored flecks or streaks on a dark background. The lower shell, is yellow with dark blotches symmetrically arranged. The head and legs are dark, and usually speckled or mottled with yellow.*

**Eliminate pitfall hazards** such as abandoned swimming pools, open excavations, unscreened window wells, ditches, and unscreened storm drains which can trap turtles and other small animals. In-ground swimming pools that are in use should have fencing with spaces less than 2.5 cm (1 in) apart to keep small turtles and other animals out. Enforce immediate (same day) backfilling of any excavations (soil test pits, foundation holes, utility ditches, etc.), or else install gently-sloping (e.g. 30° or less from horizontal) earthen or wooden ramps to allow turtles and other animals to climb out.

**Other more common species that may be encountered. – All turtles are protected from collection. Leave all turtles in the wild unless injured (see below).**

### **Box Turtle** (Special Concern)

Shell length: 4.5 - 6 inches



New York's most terrestrial turtle, the box turtle spends most of its time wandering open fields and forests, only retreating to shallow pools or

wetlands to soak during very hot and dry periods. It can completely close its shell, distinguishing it from other turtle species. The box turtle's high-domed carapace is brightly highlighted; the plastron is hinged. Males and females can be told apart by eye color—usually brown for females, red for males. Box turtles eat a variety of fleshy fruits such as strawberries and raspberries, mushrooms and other soft vegetation, worms, slugs and snails. They will also scavenge dead birds and mammals.

### **Painted Turtle**

Shell length: 5 - 7 inches



Our most common species, the painted turtle is often seen basking in large numbers on logs and stumps in marshes, ponds and lakes, disappearing into the water quickly when disturbed. Bright stripes

on the neck and spots on the head can be seen when the turtle is basking. The dark carapace is bordered with red. The plastron is plain yellow in the Eastern painted turtle, and has a dark central blotch in the Midland painted turtle. Males have long claws on their front feet; females have longer shells. Painted turtles eat a variety of invertebrates, tadpoles and vegetation, but will also scavenge carrion.

### **Wood Turtle** (Special Concern)

Shell length: 6 - 8 inches



The wood turtle gets its name from its preferred wooded habitat, as well as from the color of its carapace—the prominent annuli

give it the sculpted appearance of weathered tree rings. Wood turtles are usually found in or along clean, fast-flowing trout streams, foraging during the summer in the woodlands bordering the streams. Like other turtles, females move into open areas for nesting. Wood turtles eat berries, mushrooms, small fish, slugs, worms and tadpoles. They have also been known to feed on carrion.



### **Snapping Turtle**

Shell length: 10 - 16 inches

Easily recognized by its large head, long saw-toothed tail, stocky legs with large claws, and the jagged, saw-toothed rear edge on its dark shell, the snapping turtle is our largest freshwater turtle. Known for its defensive nature, this turtle will attack on land, but prefers to flee in water. Highly aquatic, this species is found in freshwater and brackish marshes, ponds, lakes, rivers and streams. Snappers often scavenge, but they also take live food ranging in size from small invertebrates to young waterfowl or small fish.

**If you encounter an injured turtle, please contact a local NYS DEC licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator by scanning the QR code, or calling the Regional Wildlife office at**

**845-256-3098**



**SCAN ME**

[https://www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/extapps/sls\\_searches/index.cfm?p=live\\_rehab](https://www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/extapps/sls_searches/index.cfm?p=live_rehab)

# Backyard Turtle Conservation

## *Recommendations for Landowners & Residents*

Hudsonia Ltd.



*Blanding's turtle*, Photo © S. Olyha 2006

The conservation of Blanding's turtles in Dutchess County will require long-term protection of wetland and upland habitat complexes that can accommodate the various needs of the turtles. These complexes must include different kinds of wetlands for overwintering, foraging, and refuge from drought, as well as suitable upland nesting sites and safe corridors for travel between habitats.

Anyone living within the range of Blanding's turtles in Dutchess County, or who is concerned about all species of turtles, can take steps in their everyday life to help protect turtles. Many of these steps will also protect other wildlife, including other species of reptiles and amphibians, small mammals, and birds, which face many of the same threats as the Blanding's turtle.

- ◆ During the active season (April-October), **check for turtles underneath your parked car** before driving.
- ◆ **Drive carefully** to avoid accidents with turtles and other wildlife. If you see a "rock" in the road, slow down—it may be a turtle! When you encounter a turtle on the road, stop and move it off the road in the direction it was heading. Do not take it home or move it more than 90 m (300 ft). Be careful not to endanger yourself in traffic.
- ◆ **Watch for turtles when mowing** or using motorized equipment, especially during the June nesting season when Blanding's turtles may be traveling long distances overland.
- ◆ **Eliminate pitfall hazards** such as abandoned swimming pools, open excavations, unscreened window wells, ditches, and unscreened storm drains



Photo © E. Kiviat 2009

## The Blanding's turtle, a NYS Threatened Species

which can trap turtles and other small animals. In-ground swimming pools that are in use should have fencing with spaces less than 2.5 cm (1 in) apart to keep small turtles and other animals out.

- ◆ **Alter vertical barriers** such as stone walls, stockade fences, or chain-link fences so that turtles can pass under them at intervals. Spaces should be no less than 10 cm (4 in) high and no more than 25 m (82 ft) apart, to allow turtles and other wildlife free movement across the landscape.
- ◆ Create no new lawn areas. **Consider natural landscaping**, such as shrub thickets, sparse wildflower/grass gardens, and brush piles to replace parts of your current lawn.
- ◆ If you have a dirt pile or other areas of loose, exposed soil, **refrain from digging** in it between May 26 and September 30. If you have a garden, consider fencing it. Otherwise, you may accidentally dig up turtle eggs!
- ◆ **Keep cats indoors** during the active season (April to October) or supervise them when they are outdoors. Supervise dogs when they are outdoors. Cats and dogs may harass or injure small and adult turtles and are known to kill hatchlings of many species of turtles (Mitchell and Klemens 2000). Keeping cats indoors and supervising dogs outdoors not only contributes to the safety of your pet and Blanding's turtles, but also protects many other wildlife species; see [www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html](http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html) or [www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/SafeCats.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/SafeCats.html) for more information on the contribution of domestic animals towards the decline of wildlife species and on turning your outdoor cat into a happy, safe indoor cat.
- ◆ **Refrain from using pesticides, herbicides, and other toxic substances** on your lawn or garden; instead use the many natural alternatives now available.
- ◆ **Dump no toxic substances**, such as used motor oil, antifreeze, or cleaning products, outside. These are toxic to turtles and other wildlife, and could potentially contaminate your drinking water. Dispose of them properly, according to the manufacturer's instructions.



*Nesting habitat, Photo © E. Kiviat 2009*

## The Blanding's turtle, a NYS Threatened Species

- ◆ **Keep garbage lidded and compost piles contained** and feed pets indoors to discourage predators of turtle eggs and hatchlings, such as raccoons, skunks, and opossums.

- ◆ **Do not collect turtles.** Protect turtles from collectors, and help to educate would-be turtle collectors. The New York Environmental Conservation Law imposes a fine of up to \$1000 per occurrence for collecting without a permit, harassing, or killing a Blanding's turtle.



*Blanding's turtle wetland, Photo © T. Hartwig 2009*

- ◆ **Protect wetlands, streams, and upland areas** from drainage, channelization, filling, dumping, pollution, and other damage. According to state law, it is illegal to modify any wetland known to be used by Blanding's turtles.
- ◆ **Encourage** your Planning Board and Conservation Advisory Council to incorporate Blanding's turtle habitat protection measures into their planning and decision-making.
- ◆ **Contact Hudsonia** if you would like more information on designing land use changes on your property to accommodate Blanding's turtles.



*Blanding's turtle, Photo © J. Hazard 2009*

### *If you find a Blanding's turtle, please do the following:*

1. Make a written note of the exact location, date, and number if it is tagged. If possible, take a photograph or make a sketch of the turtle for verification purposes.
2. As soon as possible, report this information to Hudsonia (845-758-0600), and the DEC (845-256-3098).
3. If the turtle is in an area of high risk, move it a short distance out of harm's way but do not take it away with you.

### *Reference:*

Mitchell, J.C. and M.W. Klemens. 2000. Primary and secondary effects of habitat alteration. P. 5-32 in: M.W. Klemens, ed. Turtle Conservation. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.

For more information, see: Hartwig, T., G. Stevens, J. Sullivan, and E. Kiviat. 2009. Blanding's turtle habitats in southern Dutchess County. Report to the Marilyn Milton Simpson Charitable Trusts and NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program. Hudsonia Ltd., Annandale, NY. 845-758-0600.