

My Turtle Booklet

Name: _____



Ontario's Turtles

Ontario has 8 species of native turtles. In our province, one species is listed as "Not at Risk", three are "Special Concern", one is "Threatened", and three are "Endangered". We will learn what these words mean as we meet the turtles that are under each class!

Turtles live in habitats called "wetlands". Wetlands are areas with lots of plants and water, and they make a perfect home for turtles! Sadly, many of Ontario's wetlands are being destroyed by land development, agriculture, pollution, and invasive species.

Wetlands are important, they protect us from water pollution, flooding and drought by acting like huge sponges and filters! They also protect us from climate change by reducing greenhouse gases!

Another big reason our turtles are in trouble is that they are often hit by cars when trying to cross the roads. Did you know, you can't travel more than 2km in southern Ontario without coming to a road? This is where the OTCC comes in! We help turtles that have been injured, and they usually come to us with injuries from cars. This is why turtles need our help now more than ever!

Species	Designation in Ontario
Midland Painted turtle	Not At Risk
Northern Map turtle	Special Concern
Eastern Musk turtle	Special Concern
Snapping turtle	Special Concern
Blanding's turtle	Threatened
Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle	Endangered
Spotted turtle	Endangered
Wood turtle	Endangered



Hello! I'm a wood turtle. We are Ontario's most terrestrial turtle species. This means that we enjoy being on land just as much as being in the water! Wood turtles are very smart and have learned to stomp on the ground to attract worms to the surface to eat! We are listed as "Endangered" in Ontario.

Hi there! I am an Eastern Spiny Softshell. Our shells are not hard like the other 7 species in Ontario and actually feel a lot like leather. This makes us very fast swimmers! We almost always stay in the water unless we are laying our eggs.



Hi! I am a Spotted Turtle. Can you see the colourful spots on my carapace? The carapace is the top part of a turtle's shell! People used to take us from the wild to keep as pets. This is one of the reasons that we are now endangered. If a species is endangered, they are at risk of becoming extinct. This is what happened to animals like Dodo birds and dinosaurs.

Hello! I'm a Blanding's turtle. We are listed as "Threatened" in Ontario. Blanding's turtles are easy to spot because of our bright yellow chins. We also have something called a hinge on our plastron, which is the bottom part of our shell. This hinge lets us hide in our shells if we feel scared!



Now that we have met some of our endangered species let's meet our three species that are listed as "Special Concern" in Ontario. Species that are special concern are at risk of becoming threatened. With all of the construction in Southern Ontario, a species can become threatened or endangered very quickly. This is why we must do what we can to protect our turtles!

Hello! I'm a Snapping turtle. Many people are scared of us because we are able to snap, but did you know that we only do this because we are scared? We cannot pull ourselves into our shell like most other turtles, so when we are on land, we are very vulnerable and frightened.



Even though Snapping turtles are not trying to be mean, only let adults approach this species in the wild.



Hi everyone! I'm a Northern Map turtle. We are very good swimmers and spend lots of time in the water. Map turtles are named after our colourful markings that look just like a topographic map! Did you know that female Map turtles are much bigger than males and are able to bite through zebra mussels?

Hello! We are Eastern Musk turtles, but you can call us Stinkpots! We have this nickname because of a scent we release when frightened. It smells very musky and makes predators leave us alone so we aren't eaten. You may not see us often. We like to sleep during the day and stay up at night, which means we are nocturnal!



Finally, let's meet the one species in Ontario that is not currently listed as "At Risk". This means there are still many of these species in the wild, but we should still be careful and try to protect them so their population doesn't become too small.



Hi! I'm a Midland Painted turtle. We are not yet listed as "At Risk" but may be soon if wetlands keep disappearing. Midland Painted turtles have colourful markings on their faces and shells. Can you spot my yellow stripes? We are the most commonly seen, and you may spot us out basking on your next hike!

Can you match the picture of the hatchling to the species of turtle?



Snapping

Spiny Softshell



Musk

Map



Blanding's

Painted



Answers

Hatchling species (from left to right and top to bottom): Map, Blanding's, Painted, Musk, Snapping, Eastern Spiny Softshell

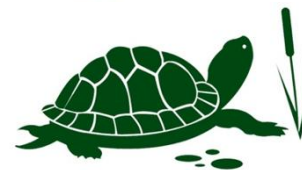
Find the names of all 8 of Ontario's turtle species!

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MUSK
SNAPPING
SPOTTED

BLANDINGS
MAP
SPINYSOFTSHELL

PAINTED
WOOD



ONTARIO TURTLE
CONSERVATION CENTRE

Phone: 705-741-5000

Email: education@ontarioturtle.ca

Website: www.OntarioTurtle.ca

4-1434 Chemong Road, Selwyn, ON
K9J 6X2

The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre respectfully acknowledges that it is situated on the treaty and traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg. We offer our gratitude to the First Peoples for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations.



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