

SLOW TO GROW, FAST TO FADE: The four species that follow take years to sexually mature and produce small clutch sizes - life history traits that limit population growth, putting at-risk populations at greater risk from disturbance.

BOX TURTLE (*Terrapene carolina*)



The box turtle is by far the most terrestrial of all of our turtles and is rarely seen in water. It is a mid-sized turtle, reaching 4-6" long and is named for their boxlike shells they can withdraw into.

Box turtles are tan, yellow, orange or brown with high-domed, ornately-marked carapaces and hinged plastrons letting them completely hide their head and limbs.

They live mostly in open woods, brush, and fields. Their diet includes worms, fruits and mushrooms. They live on average 40-60 years but can reach 100+ years old!

These turtles are a NYS species of special concern. Natural Resources tracks this turtle at West Point. Please let us know if you see one.

WOOD TURTLE (*Glyptemys insculpta*)



Wood turtles, with their raised, scultured annuli on each scute of their carapace, almost look as if they are wood-carved. Wood turtles are medium-sized turtles, reaching 6-8+” long.

This species is tan, brown or gray-brown with yellow plastrons with black spots and yellow-orange chins, necks, legs and tails.

These turtles live mostly in forests and streams; eats fish, worms, mushrooms, and fruits; and live to be 40-60 years old. They are a NYS species of special concern.

They are also under consideration for federal listing as threatened or endangered. Natural Resources tracks this turtle at West Point. Please let us know if you see one.

SPOTTED TURTLE (*Clemmys guttata*)



The spotted turtle is a dark green to black turtle with small yellow spots on its carapace. It is a small turtle, measuring 3-5” long and lives in shallow wetlands, pools and in streams.

Spotted turtles live in shallow wetlands, eating mostly amphibian eggs, insects, and worms. They live 50 years or more and are a NYS species of special concern.

They are also under consideration for federal listing as threatened or endangered. Natural Resources tracks this turtle at West Point. Please let us know if you see one.

BOG TURTLE (*Glyptemys mühlenbergi*)



The bog turtle is the smallest turtle in New York and at the greatest conservation risk. It measures 3-5” long and is named for the shallow water wetland habitats it lives in.

Bog turtles are brown to black with large yellow-orange spots on their neck area. They have dark carapaces, sometimes with radiating lighter markings.

They live in specific successional, shallow wetlands. They eat invertebrates, amphibian eggs as well as plant matter and can live at least to ages of 40-50 years old.

Bog turtles have not been confirmed to be present at West Point but there are historical reports of them in our area and it is very possible that they live here.

Bog turtles are a federally endangered species. Natural Resources is extremely interested in any sightings of this turtle. Please let us know if you see one.

FAQ: TURTLE EARS, WINTER, LEECHES, DISEASE

Q: Do turtles have ears? Can they hear? Turtles do not have external ears, but they do have inner ears covered by thin skin flaps and with that, have the ability to hear some noise.

Q: How do turtles survive in the winter? Reptiles in colder winter areas go into a hibernation-like state called brumation. Turtles brumate underwater or in underground burrows.

Q: What sort of parasites can turtles get? There are many turtle parasites - flukes, nematodes, worms, and especially leeches. Leeches can even feed on and damage turtle shells.

Q: Are there any diseases turtles can pass on? Yes. Turtles can carry bacteria including *Salmonella* so after touching any turtle, pet or wild, people should immediately wash their hands.

BASIC WILDLIFE SAFETY REVIEW

Do these things to keep people and animals safe:

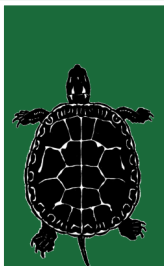
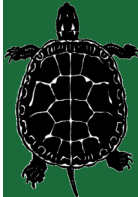
- **NEVER FEED WILDLIFE** - Nuisance animal issues often begin over food. Feeding wild animals is illegal.
- **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE** - Never approach, corner or handle wildlife. Risks incl. disease, bite, & scratch.
- **REPORT ANIMAL ISSUES** - Call a wildlife responder if human or animal well-being is a concern.

REPORTING TURTLE ISSUES

Know when and what to report and who to contact

- **WHEN TO REPORT:** Call right away If you see 1) an injured or stranded turtle 2) someone catching, collecting or injuring turtles, 3) someone releasing pet turtles
- **WHAT TO REPORT:** Please report 1) when & 2) where the issue happened, 3) what happened 4) where turtle is now (if known), 5) your name and phone number.
- **CONTACT:** Natural Resources: 845-938-2314, -7122 (M-F, 0800-1630); West Point Game Wardens via the Military Police Sgt Desk at: 845-938-3333 (anytime).

**TURTLES
OF THE WEST POINT
MILITARY RESERVATION**



Building 667A Ruger Road
West Point, NY 10996
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(845) 938-7122, (845) 938-2314

THE TURTLES OF WEST POINT

A turtle is as familiar and identifiable a creature as any of our resident wildlife. A person may or may not be able to identify it to the level of the species, but people from ages two to 102 who encounter a slow-moving, armored reptile instantly know what they have found. As a group, these unique animals have existed for hundreds of millions of years. Today there are 300+ species on Earth as varied as aquatic and terrestrial turtles like those at West Point and sea turtles and terrestrial tortoises found elsewhere.

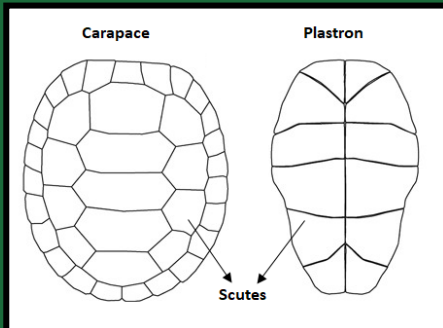
This brochure seeks to inform readers about our nine (and maybe ten) resident turtle species, including brief summaries of their physical description, life history, habitat, and diet. We also discuss turtles shells and some other interesting features. We touch upon one invasive species we have and another endangered species we might have. While we hope this brochure informs and prepares readers, it is by no means a comprehensive guide. For more, see NYSDEC's website: www.dec.ny.gov

THE SHELL

The shell is the most distinctive part of the turtle and helps provide the turtle with both protection from predators as well as shelter from other aspects of its environment.

Turtle shells have two parts, the carapace that covers the back and the plastron that covers the belly. The shell is made up of bone with an outer covering of special scales.

Those special scales are called scutes. Scutes are made up of keratin, the same material that makes up hair, nails, scales, and many other animal parts.



In many species of turtles, an individual turtle's plastron can be used to tell it's sex. Males have concave (indented) plastrons. Females have flat or convex (bulging) plastrons.

While the shells of turtles makes them easily recognizable to us and better protected, turtle shells also give turtles another trait that they are famous for - being slow.

The weight of a turtle's shell as well as the restriction of movement from the shell on a turtle's limbs makes turtles move very slowly on land.

HARVESTING: Snapping turtles may be harvested in New York. Licensing, implement, season, size and bag limit regulations apply. Per state regulations, the harvesting, taking, or possessing of any other turtles is prohibited.

PAINTED TURTLE (*Chelydra serpentina*)



The painted turtle is the most abundant turtle at West Point, in New York, and maybe even in the entire U.S. It is a medium-sized turtle and can reach lengths of 7-10".

They have olive-black carapaces, flatter than in other turtles, with pale leading scute lines, red shell edge markings, and red and yellow head, and neck stripes.

They are mostly aquatic, spending life in or near lakes, ponds, and wetlands. They lay 1-2 clutches of 4-10 eggs each per year and can live to over 50 years old.

Painted turtles are omnivores eating fish, insects, worms and plants. A basking painted turtle, alone or in a row on a log, is a common summer sight at West Point.

We have two subspecies at West Point- the eastern painted turtle (*C.p. picta*) - more common as well as the midland painted turtle (*C.p. marginata*), introduced.

NEVER RELEASE PET TURTLES: Releasing turtles or any other animals into a new environment is bad for both the animal and environment. It is against New York and West Point regulations to release animals at West Point.

RED-EARED SLIDER (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)



This pond slider is native to the south central United States but as a popular pet reptile, it has been released and become an invasive species around the world, including at West Point.

Usually ranging between 6-8", they can grow over 12" long. They have olive-green to brown carapaces with irregular plastron markings; head, neck and limb stripes and thick red "ear" marks on the their heads. In both their native and introduced ranges, these turtles live in ponds, lakes, streams and rivers.

These turtles can nest up to five times a year, averaging 7-14 eggs per clutch, sometimes more. They are omnivorous, like most turtles, and may live 40 years or more.

As an invasive species, red-eared sliders can cause harm to native turtle species by either attacking them out right or by out-competing them for food and prime basking sites, preventing native turtles from warming up.

WHY'D A TURTLE CROSS A ROAD?: Turtles cross roads to find new ponds or lay eggs. This risks vehicle strikes. If you can do so safely, move them off-road in the direction they face or they may turn back into the road.

MUSK TURTLE (*Sternotherus odoratus*)



Musk turtles AKA stinkpots are our smallest confirmed turtle species at West Point and measure only 3-5". They are named for a smelly odor they produce to deter predators.

They are olive-green to black with brown to black high-domed carapaces, small hinged plastrons, chin and throat barbels, and are often found covered in algae.

Stinkpots are highly aquatic and live in slow moving, streams or weedy, ponds and wetlands. They lay 1-2 clutches of 1-9 eggs yearly and may live to 50 years old.

Musk turtles are mostly nocturnal and forage not by swimming but by walking along the bottom where they will eat algae, small fish, and mollusks.

SNAPPING TURTLE (*Chelydra serpentina*)



New York's state reptile and largest non-marine reptile, the snapping turtle is commonly seen and uncommonly large - 12-20+" long, 15-40+ lbs and rarely 60+ lbs.

Snapping turtles are tan, green, or brown and are very rugged, muscular turtles with three carapace keel rows, a sawtooth tail, long necks, and powerful snapping jaws.

"Snappers" are found in lakes, ponds or marshes. They nest in early to mid-summer, one clutch of 20-80 eggs. They are omnivorous and may live to over 60 years old.

These turtles prefer to flee danger but will defend themselves aggressively if unable to escape. This, their long necks and strong bite makes handling them dangerous.

To move one, call a wildlife responder or with gloves on, an adult should lift it from rear of shell and carefully walk or carry it to safety holding it away from you.

NEVER LIFT A TURTLE BY THE TAIL: Lifting a turtle by its tail risks dislocating the bones in the tail and spine and seriously injuring the turtle. Whether a snapping turtle or another turtle species, never lift a turtle by its tail.