

# Wood Turtle

*Glyptemys insculpta*

**STATUS**

Threatened 

Vulnerable 

37



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## Species Description

The Wood Turtle has a bumpy, sculpted shell that is dark grey to brown, with orange markings when wet. The skin of the throat, tail, and limbs are orange-red. Hatchlings are light brown and toonie-sized, and adults are about 16-21 cm long.

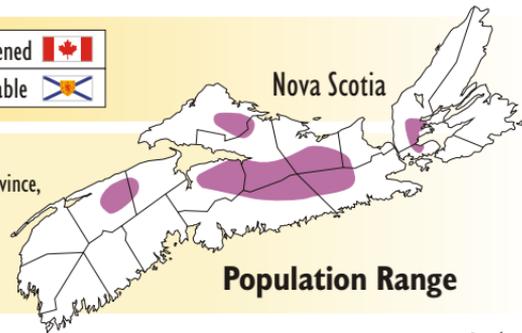


**carapace** (back):  
dark grey; orange  
markings (wet)



**plastron** (belly):  
yellowish; small  
black blotches

Found throughout the province,  
with concentrations in  
Guysborough and  
Annapolis Counties.



**Population Range**

## Habitat

Clear, moderately moving rivers and tributaries in forests or flood plains. Local plants include alders, chokecherry, hawthorn and mixed wood stands of deciduous and coniferous trees. Females lay their eggs in sandy bars along rivers and other gravel areas (driveways, roadsides, borrow pits) in June.



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Wood Turtles are typically found basking in the sun by rivers and streams in spring; along roadsides in June & July (when females are up laying eggs) and August & September (when travelling to overwintering sites); swimming in waterways, or walking through nearby woods, in the spring, summer, and fall.

## Interesting Points

- For the first 25 years, age is determined by counting annuli (growth rings) on the plastron.
- They eat slugs, insects, green plants, grasses, mushrooms, and berries.
- They are the most terrestrial of the freshwater turtles.



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## Similar Species

### Painted Turtle:

Smaller (10-15 cm); low-domed shell; red-orange markings on shell and face; all yellow/orange plastron; white outline around each shell segment.



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### Blanding's Turtle:

Similar size (20-25 cm); smooth, high-domed shell; bright yellow throat and chin; smile on face; yellow flecks on carapace.



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### Snapping Turtle:

Much larger (up to 60 cm long); sculpted, bumpy shell, jagged at the back; spiky tail, huge head and pronounced beak; brown-grey colour.



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## Threats to Survival

- Road mortality and collection for the pet trade.
- Habitat loss and degradation, from increasing development along rivers, water course alteration, farm expansion, and other industry practices.
- Human disturbance from an increase in recreational activities in river and riparian areas.



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## How You Can Help

Do not disturb turtles and leave them where you find them. Do not support the wild animal pet trade by having wild turtles as pets. Create or maintain natural buffers along watercourses. Keep your eyes open for turtles on the road and drive carefully. Refer to the Stewardship Plan for information on how to work in Wood Turtle habitat (link below).



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## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

**Contact:** NS DNR at (902) 679-6091, [elderkmf@gov.ns.ca](mailto:elderkmf@gov.ns.ca)

**Info:** [www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca](http://www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca)

**Sighting Reports:** 1-866-727-3447 or [sightings@speciesatrisk.ca](mailto:sightings@speciesatrisk.ca)

**Stewardship Plan:** [www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/biodiv/species\\_recovery.htm](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/biodiv/species_recovery.htm)