

missing

Have You Seen Me?



The Blanding's Turtle is one of the rarest species of turtle in Pennsylvania. Officially it is listed as a candidate species of special concern for the state, and it is a Northeast region priority species. Historically, the Blanding's Turtle was found only in Erie and Crawford Counties in the northwest part of the state, but with the flooding of Pymatuning Swamp and development of towns in its range, the Blanding's Turtle may no longer reside in Pennsylvania at all. Breeding populations haven't been documented in much of its historic range in over 100 years.

The Blanding's Turtle is normally found in poorly-drained wetlands, bogs, backwater areas of larger bays, and slow moving, shallow rivers or creeks. Within these areas, it normally prefers to stay within the protected, grassy areas, but it will occasionally come out to more open water to bask.

This is a rather large turtle compared to most of the other species in Pennsylvania. It normally has a carapace (top shell) length of 8-10" when mature. The skin itself is black, the carapace is black with scattered yellow dots, and the plastron (bottom shell) is yellow and black with a hinge near the front legs. Because this is a semi-aquatic species, adults will sometimes have a layer of algae growing on the shell that will obscure the markings and give the shell and/or skin a slightly greenish cast. The main identifying mark of this turtle is its bright yellow chin. No other turtle in Pennsylvania has this appearance.

Development, loss of habitat, long maturation time, and restricted distribution have all led to the demise of the Blanding's Turtle in Pennsylvania. Although it is believed to be extirpated from the state, turtles sometimes show up along the shores of Lake Erie. It is unknown whether these individuals represent a legitimate breeding population or if they are merely drifters or intentional relocations from nearby populations in Ohio.

How you can help:

If you find a turtle you believe may be a Blanding's Turtle, photograph the animal, document the place and time, and send in your report.

Identification Help:

To find more information on how to identify a Blanding's Turtle, including photographs and more characteristics, please visit <http://paherps.com>

Reports:

Please send any information, reports, and photographs to Tim Maret of the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas. <http://paherpatlas.org>