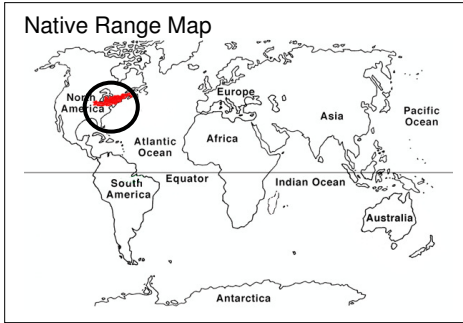


### Native Range Map



## Blanding's Turtle

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Reptilia  
Order: Testudines  
Family: Emydidae  
Genus: *Emydoidea*  
Species: *blandingii*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

### Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The Blanding's turtle is found in lake shallows, ponds, and marshes having soft bottoms and dense, aquatic vegetation. Specifically they are found around the Great Lakes and west to Nebraska, with a separate population in southern New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and eastern New York.
- **Exhibit Location:** Turtle Pond across from the Swan Pond

### Characteristics

- Adults range from 5-10 ½ inches long.
- This is a relatively large, freshwater turtle with a high-domed, dark, green shell. Its distinctive yellow throat easily identifies it. Its underside is also yellow with black patches.
- The Blanding's is a "semi-box turtle" having a hinged plastron (under shell), but it can't completely withdraw its appendages (arms and legs) into its shell.
- Males have a relatively concave (curved inward like the inside of a ball) plastron. Females have a flatter plastron and a narrower tail.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** about 60 years; **In Captivity** about 100 years

### Behaviors

- The Blanding's turtle tends to prefer shallow, slow-moving wetlands. It uses vegetation to stay out of sight from potential predators. It usually feeds while submerged under water. This turtle basks and floats, is diurnal (active during the day), and most active in the early morning from April through September.
- This is a shy turtle that rarely bites, but may hiss when picked up.
- It is very tolerant of cold temperatures, but summer heat may limit its activity to early morning and late afternoon. The Blanding's generally hibernates from late October through early April. It sometimes can be seen moving slowly below the ice in winter.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** natural, outside pond habitat

### Reproduction

- Blanding's turtles become sexually mature at about 20 years of age and reproduce for the next 40 years. They reproduce by internal fertilization taking place in the water. Reproduction takes place from April to November, but is concentrated during April and May.
- Females may travel considerable distances from the water to find suitable nest sites. They nest usually during June and July, laying about 6-21 oval, dull white 1 ½ inch eggs. The eggs are laid in sandy soil in warm, sunny areas.
- Gestation is about 45-80 days, depending on the temperature and moisture. The temperature of the nest determines sex of the young. Less than 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit) leads to male hatchlings. Greater than 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) leads to female hatchlings.
- Hatchlings emerge from the nest from August through September. They must travel a distance to an aquatic habitat. This makes them vulnerable to predators. The route they take is the same one the female took back to the water.

## Diet

- **In the Wild:** fish, insects, snails, slugs, tadpoles, leeches, crayfish, aquatic vegetation, earthworms
- **At the Zoo:** AQC (gelatin cubes made with carrots, fish and meat), fuzzy mice (baby mice with some fur)

## Conservation Status

- **IUCN status 2004:** Lower Risk, Near Threatened
- Michigan has a daily bag and possession limit in effect. In Iowa, the Blanding's turtle is considered threatened and it is illegal to kill or collect this animal.
- The Nova Scotia Blanding's turtle wasn't discovered until 1953 and consists of 3 isolated populations, numbering as few as 200 adult turtles. Habitat loss outside the park, shortage of suitable nesting sites, road kill, and raccoon predation limit the populations. Nest flooding and a short summer season contribute to poor survival rates. There is a small population of juveniles and young adults. (Most turtles are greater than 30 years of age).
- Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site of Canada protects this species. They monitor and record numbers and do radio-tracking studies to clarify travel and where they spend their winters. Once the females have laid their eggs, the nests are covered with a screen to keep out predators. In the fall, hatchlings are counted, measured, and released. Interpretive signs, programs, and pamphlets are available for visitors to the park.
- Their future depends on the condition and availability of wetland habitats. Roads that lead to many being hit by cars fragment their migration to suitable nesting sites. We can take measures to protect the Blanding's turtle ourselves. First, do not touch or disturb one in the wild. Second, do not litter. This attracts raccoons that prey upon the turtles. Lastly, drive carefully when near areas where these turtles live. Their nest sites are often near roadsides.
- Predators: raccoons, skunks, humans

## Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Feeding is done mainly underwater and food is seized on land and carried to the water for swallowing. Prey is either swallowed whole or, if too large, is held by the jaws and shredded into smaller pieces by the front claws.
- They are nervous turtles. When basking with other turtle species, they are the first to dive off their basking perch and take refuge in the water. They seem to take longer to resurface than other species such as the painted turtle.

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