

Eastern Painted Turtle

Chrysemys picta picta

STATUS

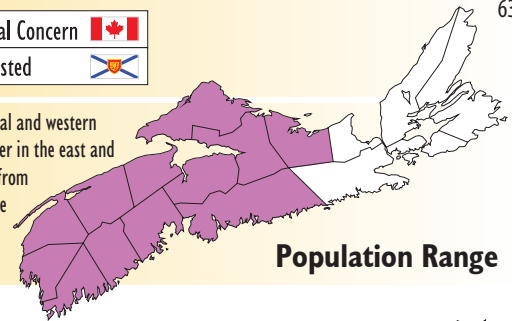
Special Concern 

Not listed 



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Common throughout central and western Nova Scotia, becoming rarer in the east and north. Occasional reports from Cape Breton, however these may be the result of human introductions.



Population Range

Habitat

Found in shallow, slow-moving freshwater habitats including wetlands, lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers. It may also be found in human-made water bodies, including agricultural ponds, reservoirs, and ditches, and is occasionally seen in urban areas. It prefers areas with ample submerged and floating vegetation and abundant basking spots such as partially submerged logs, rocks, and well-vegetated shorelines. Nesting occurs in May and June on exposed sandy or graveled slopes, including beaches, railroad beds, and roadsides.

Species Description

The Eastern Painted Turtle has a smooth, black, or deep olive-green shell. Its head has bright yellow stripes that transition to red on the neck and front legs and continue around the edge of the shell. The tail typically has red or yellow stripes. Hatchlings are toonie-sized and brown, with red patterning around the edge of the shell. Adults range from 13 to 18 cm in length.



© WENDY HOLMAN

carapace (back):
olive to black; red markings
along the edge.



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plastron (belly):
orange to yellow-beige.



Basking habitat

© JEFFIE MCNEIL



Eastern Painted Turtle habitat

© JEFFIE MCNEIL

Eastern Painted Turtles are found in well-vegetated lakes, wetlands, and ponds, especially around lily pads and pickerel weed. They are often seen basking in the sun on logs and rocks. Watch for turtles on roads during nesting season.



Interesting Points

- One of two subspecies of Painted Turtle found in central and eastern Canada, both recognized as a species of special concern.
- Adults can spend up to half the year under water and sediment while hibernating.
- Hatchlings frequently overwinter in the nest and therefore may emerge in either fall or spring.
- One nest can contain hatchlings from multiple fathers.



Eastern Painted Turtle hatchling

© MEGAN CROWLEY

Threats to Survival

- Road mortality from vehicle collisions.
- Habitat degradation and loss (shoreline development, logging, road construction).
- By-catch from recreational angling (likely underreported).
- Predation of nests and hatchlings (particularly by raccoons).
- The pet trade (illegal removal from the wild and the release of non-native species).



Crossing a roadway

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Similar Species

Often released from the pet trade, the Red-eared Slider is an invasive species that may be mistaken for the native Eastern Painted Turtle but competes with it for habitat and resources.



© TARY KENNEDY

Red-eared Slider:

Distinct red patch behind the eyes, oval-shaped, domed, and keeled shell, and dark irregular central markings on a yellow plastron. Slightly larger (up to 24 cm in length).

How You Can Help

Learn to recognize this species and report your sightings. Join citizen science projects such as the Nova Scotia Herpetofauna Atlas on iNaturalist. Drive carefully and watch for turtles on the road during nesting season, as they frequently cross in search of nesting sites. Protect wetlands and shorelines on your property by maintaining natural vegetation and minimizing disturbance. Never move wild turtles or release pet turtles into the wild. Report sightings of invasive species.



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Monitoring Eastern Painted Turtle nesting sites



© AURIEA VIOLA

Eastern Painted Turtle nesting

Sighting Reports & Stewardship

Sighting Reports: MTRI: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings; NS Department of Natural Resources: biodiversity@novascotia.ca; Within Kejimikujik: Parks Canada (902) 682-2770; Invasive Species: www.nsinvasives.ca
Stewardship: MTRI: info@merseytobeatic.ca; Kejimikujik: benevolekeji-kejivolunteer@pc.gc.ca