



Blanding's turtle

Emydoidea blandingii

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Testudines
Family:	Emydidae

Features

Blanding's turtle ranges from five to 10 1/4 inches long. It has a hinge on the plastron (lower shell), allowing the shell to be closed partially. Its bright yellow chin and throat are distinctive. The carapace (upper shell) is helmet-shaped and covered with pale yellow spots. The plastron is yellow with black blotches. Blanding's turtle is larger than any of the other three Iowa species that have a hinged plastron. It is more terrestrial than most of Iowa's aquatic turtles.

Natural History

Blanding's turtle is found in marshes, bogs, lakes, and streams. It prefers to live in water that is less than four inches deep with dense emergent vegetation and a mud bottom. It is aquatic, but often is found on land not far from water. It spends the winter buried in mud at the bottom of the body of water. It eats crayfish, insects, fish, frogs, snails, berries, and plants. Courtship and mating occur from

April through June. The female deposits six to 15 eggs in a nest in the soil during June or July. The eggs hatch in August or September. It is most abundant in north-central Iowa, wherever natural marshes persist. Its population is declining as its habitat is being destroyed but it is not presently considered threatened or endangered.

Habitats

Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

uncommon; native

Iowa Range

northern two-thirds of Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.