

Species At Risk News Article

Grade 4 – Languages



Lesson Details

Grade Level:	4	Curriculum Links:	Languages, Science and Technology	Time Needed:	2 hours
Learning Goal	To become aware of the many turtle species that are currently at risk in Ontario. By using literacy and writing skills, the students will write a news article about a species of their choice.				
Success Criteria	By the end of the lesson, students should be able to properly understand and identify the various components of a news article and write an article focused on an Ontario turtle species that is at risk.				
Specific Expectations	<p><i>Languages – Writing: Developing and Organizing Content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the topic, propose, and audience for a variety of writing forms; Identify and order main ideas and supporting details and group them into units that could be used to develop a summary, using a variety of graphic organizers; <p><i>Science and Technology – Understanding Life Systems: Habitat and Communities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify reasons for the depletion or extinction of a plant or animal species, evaluate the impacts on the rest of the natural community, and propose possible actions for preventing such depletions or extinctions from happening; Use appropriate science and technology vocabulary, including: habitat, population, community, adaptation, and food chain, in oral and written communication. 				
Materials Needed	Worksheet (attached), Species at Risk Information Sheet (attached), Pencil, Computer and Internet Access.				

Lesson Description

Overview	Introduce the various components of a news paper article and the Ontario turtles who are considered Species at Risk. The students will then write a news paper article about their chosen turtle species.
Activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Begin by introducing what a news paper article is and its various components (Headline or Title, Byline, Summary, Quotes, etc.). You may choose to share some examples of articles from your local paper. Next, introduce the 8 species of Ontario Turtles. 7 out of 8 of these species are considered Species at Risk. See attached Species at Risk Information Sheet for more information. Hand out the attached worksheet to the students so they can begin organizing their thoughts for their article. Allow the students time to work on a computer with internet access so they can properly format their article and include images. Optional: Allow the students to read their articles to the class.
Blacklist Masters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet (attached) Species at Risk Information Sheet (attached) Video Link(s): How You Can Help Ontario Turtles and Threats to Ontario Turtles For more information, please visit https://www.turtleguardians.com/why-saving-turtles-is-important/
Place-Based Learning	Students are encouraged to visit a natural area to gain real life experience and knowledge of the habitats that a turtle they are writing about might live in.

Lesson Description

Inquiry-Based Learning

Using **Structured Inquiry**, the students will learn about the various Ontario turtles at risk and write a news article about their chosen species.

Ask the students:

- Where does this turtle live in Ontario?
- What is included in the turtle's diet?
- Why is this turtle a Species at Risk?
- What can we do to help save this turtle?

Turtle Stories

News articles are important pieces for sharing information to large groups. What other information about turtles do you think is important and worth writing in a news article. Take some time to write another. Students are encouraged to share their experiences, pictures, and news articles on the Turtle Stories website, found here:

<https://www.turtlestories.ca/>

Turtle Guardian Program Links

In **Level 1** (Ontario Turtle Identification) of the **Turtle Guardian Program**, students will learn how to identify all 8 species of Ontario's turtles and the threats they face. For more information, please visit <https://www.turtleguardians.com/what-is-a-turtle-guardian/>

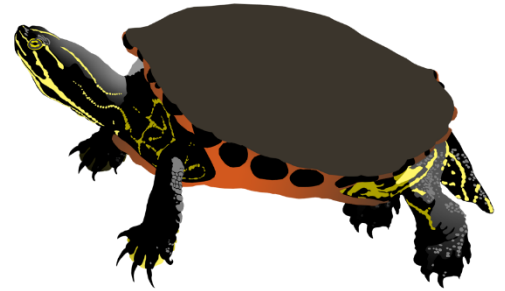
My Notes

Species At Risk – Ontario Turtles Guide

Of the 8 turtle species that are native to Ontario, 7 of them are considered at risk. Over the last few centuries, more than 75% of turtle wetland habitats have been drained for various reasons. Today, human development depletes and/or pollutes turtle habitats making it difficult for their survival. Turtles have the responsibility of keeping wetlands healthy and clean. Although turtles are important, they have been continually impacted by humans and thus require protection.

Painted Turtle

There are two types of Painted Turtles in Ontario; the Midland Painted Turtle and the Western Painted Turtle. Midland Painted Turtles have red stripes on their neck, while Western Painted Turtles do not.

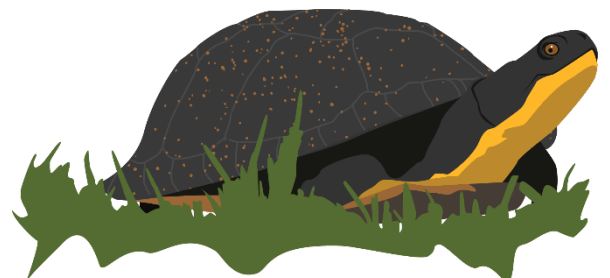


The Painted Turtle is a small and fast turtle. They have a smooth, dark coloured shell and a yellow belly. They are adaptable and can live in many places wherever aquatic plants, insects, snails or tadpoles are abundant as well as logs and rocks for basking. They are by far the most common turtles in the province and can live for more than 40 years – however, losses of painted turtle nests and young are high. Mortality on roads and habitat degradation from human impact is a cause for this loss. Painted Turtles can be found from Southern Ontario to as far north as Wawa.

The status of the Painted Turtle is secure both provincially and nationally.

Blanding's Turtle

Blanding's Turtles have a bright yellow neck and dark coloured head. They also have a dark shell with many small dots on it. They are semi-aquatic and will travel long distances to reach nesting sites – up to 2.5 km from wetlands. The Blanding's Turtle



can live for more than seven decades – females, however, do not start breeding until they are between 20 and 25 years old. This is typically the last species to finish nesting in late June to early July, often moving from water to find a sandy place to lay eggs. Blanding’s Turtles feed on fish, frogs, berries, crayfish, plants and dead animals; making them an omnivore. Their population is scattered throughout Southern Ontario, to as far north as Sudbury.

The status of the Blanding’s Turtle is threatened provincially and nationally.

Spiny Softshell Turtle

The Spiny Softshell Turtle has a soft leathery olive-green coloured shell with dots on it and a long pig-like nose. Almost completely aquatic, they search beneath rocks, logs and roots for snails, crayfish and aquatic insect larvae or bury themselves in the silt when hunting for food. Spiny Softshell Turtles have disappeared from most of Ontario – in fact, they can be only found in Southwestern Ontario.



The status of the Spiny Softshell Turtle is threatened provincially and nationally.

Map Turtle

The Map Turtle has an olive-brown coloured shell with thin brown-yellow coloured lines that are pattered and look like a “map”. It also has a small yellow spot found behind its eyes. Similar to the painted turtle, however larger in size and no red colouring on its neck. They live in clear, mud-bottomed sections of large rivers and bays – due to where they live they are often harmed by boats. They are also harmed and drown in commercial fishing traps set by humans. In addition, poor water quality renders them susceptible to shell rot. Map turtles enjoy eating clams, snails, crayfish, molluscs, plants, and fish. Map turtles are the least studied turtle in Ontario, leaving lots of error and uncertainties surrounding the dangers they face. They have a scattered population along the Great Lakes as well as along some rivers north to Pembroke.



The status of the Map turtle is of special concern provincially and nationally.

Spotted Turtle

The Spotted Turtle is small. It has a black shell that is covered in yellow spots. These yellow spots are also on the Spotted Turtles head and arms and legs. There are two large spots on the side of its head that look like ears. They are generally the first turtle species to emerge in April from hibernation and begin migrating to shallow pools in swamps, grass marshes, and fens to bask and breed. They feed on small fish, betties, frogs, and dead plants at the bottom of the water. In early autumn the Spotted Turtle gathers in mossy pockets beneath submerged tree roots or rock shelves to spend the winter. Poaching by turtle collectors, habitat loss, and mortality on roads by humans have contributed to a loss of 40% of the known Ontario population. However, due to their low-lying nature throughout most of the year, they tend to live up to 60 years of age. They can be found mostly around Georgian Bay, and from Southwestern to Eastern Ontario.



The status of the Spotted Turtle is endangered provincially and nationally.

Wood Turtle

The Wood Turtle has a shell that looks like wood – the different sections of the shell are slightly raised to look rough in texture. They have a yellow belly with black spots on it. They live in cool streams near forests, swamps, and marshy meadows. They are also good climbers and spend most of their time on land while eating worms, slugs, insects, wild fruit, mushrooms, and plants. In 1994, a Wood turtle population of some 400 in Southwestern Ontario suddenly declined by at least half, almost certainly due to poaching and the illegal pet trade. Although these turtles likely lived throughout most of Southern and Central Ontario, it is estimated that only 1000 to 1600 adults are left in widely separated populations throughout Ontario.



The status of the Wood Turtle is endangered provincially and considered a species of special concern nationally.

Stinkpot (Musk) Turtle

The Musk Turtle is Ontario's smallest turtle – smaller than your hand. Their name comes from the fact that they make a bad smell when handled or if they feel threatened. They have a tiny nose and an olive to black coloured shell. Their belly is yellow brown in colour. The Musk Turtle spends most of its time in the water, and thus can be found in shallow bays, ponds, marshes, and streams where they can stay underwater but still feel the heat of the sun to stay warm. They will leave the water at dusk to catch crayfish, tadpoles, snails, and aquatic insects for food. The Musk Turtle is known to live for up to 55 years, but due to wetland destruction these turtles are disappearing from most of Southern Ontario. You can still find some turtles of this species along Lake Erie and the Detroit River, as well as near Parry Sound to Prince Edward County.



The status of the Musk Turtle is threatened provincially and nationally.

Snapping Turtle

The Snapping turtle is considered a living dinosaur and one of the world's oldest species as it lived during the Cretaceous period, 50 million years ago.

They have a rough shell that is brown to dark green in colour. They also have large arms and legs with sharp claws. They are the only turtle with a very small belly (under-shell) so they are not able to pull their arms and legs inside their shell to hide. Instead, they “snap” when threatened. Their bite, however, cannot break through a carrot making them harmless to humans. Snapping Turtles are the most widespread species, living in marshes, ponds, and lakes throughout Southern Ontario, and north to Elliot Lake. They eat primarily dead fish and amphibians, as well as live fish, snails, and mussels. Their population numbers are falling. Egg failure and deformities are common in snapping turtle populations where high levels of pollutants are found in their water bodies. Even in Algonquin Provincial Park, a long-studied snapping turtle population has fallen by at least 50 percent.



The status of the Snapping Turtle is declining and now considered to be at risk.



Species At Risk News Article

Species: _____

Topic (Headline or Title): _____

Byline (Your Name): _____

Targeted Audience: _____

Date and Time (If necessary): _____

Location (If necessary): _____

Why did you choose this species?

What is included in this turtle's diet?

Why is this turtle considered a Species at Risk?

What can we do to help save this turtle species?

Additional Notes:

