

TURTLES TO WATCH FOR

Please contact the Natural Resources Branch if you see any of these turtles on Fort Drum.

BLANDING'S TURTLE

(*Emydoidea blandingii*)

The Blanding's Turtle is mid- to large-sized (5-7 inches) with a bright yellow throat. The carapace is smooth, elongated, and helmet-shaped and is colored brown to black with adorning small tan "squiggle" lines.



Blanding's Turtles are active from early April into October and perhaps November. Blanding's Turtles prefer shallow water connected to deeper waters ringed but not covered by trees.

SPOTTED TURTLE (*Clemmys guttata*)



A small turtle (3.5-4.5 inches), the Spotted Turtle has a black carapace sprinkled with bright yellow spots. Females have yellow on their chin.

BOG TURTLE (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*)

The Bog Turtle is another small turtle with a maximum length of 4.5 inches. A bright yellow or orange blotch on each side of its head and neck are a distinctive feature. The carapace has prominent rings on the scutes similar to the Wood Turtle.



The Bog Turtle is a federally endangered species, but it has never been documented on Fort Drum.

TURTLES ON FORT DRUM

New York State is home to 12 freshwater species of turtles, four of which are known to occur on Ft. Drum.

All turtles on Fort Drum are associated with water. Snapping and Painted Turtles are "aquatic" turtles and are typically found along water bodies although they may be found in upland areas when laying eggs. Wood and Blanding's Turtles are considered "semi-aquatic" as they frequent both wet and dry habitats.

While most turtles do not tolerate cold, New York turtle species have adapted to tolerate winters. Turtles on Fort Drum hibernate submerged in water. Water provides a stable environment resilient to sudden temperature changes. During hibernation, turtles reduce their metabolism dramatically and thus require less oxygen. Turtles acquire the small amount oxygen they need during hibernation via specialized tissues in their mouth and cloaca. The tissues in these cavities effectively function as gills allowing oxygen to be absorbed into the blood stream. Turtles can remain submerged in water for months during the winter.

PROTECTION OF TURTLES IN NEW YORK AND FORT DRUM

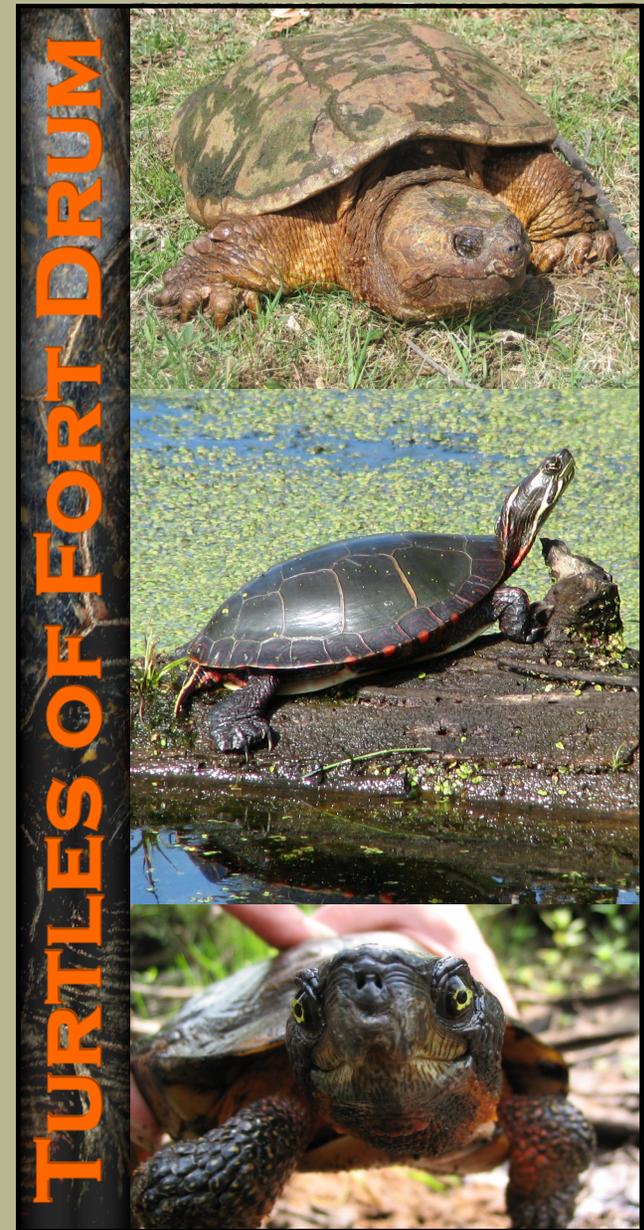
Snapping Turtles are the only turtle species that can be harvested on Fort Drum. See applicable New York State regulations for more information.

It is illegal to harvest, take, or possess any other turtle species at any time.

Per both New York State and Fort Drum regulations, you may not release ANY "pet" or non-native species into the wild at any time.

Special Status Turtles in New York State:
Spotted Turtle: NYS Species of Special Concern
Wood Turtle: NYS Species of Special Concern
Blanding's Turtle: NYS Threatened Species
Bog Turtle: NYS Endangered Species & Federally Threatened Species

All photos are from Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch or used with permission by Andrea Chaloux (Blanding's Turtle), James P. Gibbs (Spotted Turtle), and J.D. Kleopfer (Bog Turtle).



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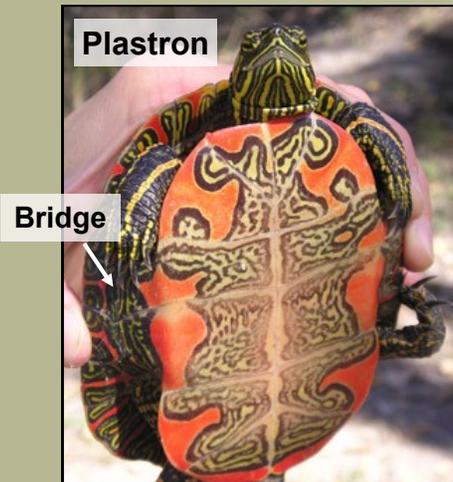
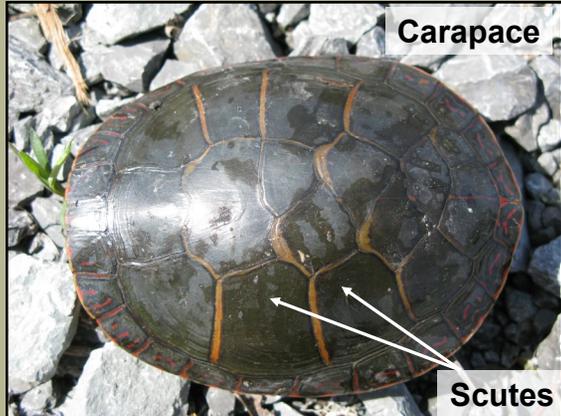
TALKIN' TURTLE

Turtles and tortoises first evolved more than 200 million years ago and have changed little since.

Turtles are readily identifiable by their most distinctive feature—the shell. The shell actually consists of two parts: an upper domed-shaped “carapace” and a “plastron” protecting the belly. A “bridge” connects the carapace and plastron. The complete shell is derived from over 50 bones, including fused vertebrae (backbones). Leathery “scales” called “scutes” cover the carapace.

The Blanding’s Turtle as well as some other turtles have a front hinge located on the plastron which it can close giving its head additional protection from predators.

The parts of the shell of a Painted Turtle are below:



PAINTED TURTLE

(*Chrysemys picta*)

Painted Turtles are the most common turtles on Fort Drum, commonly seen basking on logs and rocks in lakes, ponds, and wetlands.

The oval carapace of the Painted Turtle is relatively flattened making these turtles very capable swimmers. The outer scutes typically have red or yellow markings. The sides of the tail, head and neck regions are “painted” with yellow and red stripes. (See photos on the left.)



WOOD TURTLE

(*Glyptemys insculpta*)

The Wood Turtle is a relatively large turtle with a dark “sculpted” carapace. The plastron is often yellow, red, or orange as are the chin, throat, forelimbs and tail areas.

Look for these beautiful turtles along rivers and larger streams with nearby wooded, low-canopy uplands. This is the third most common turtle on Fort Drum. Some have radio transmitters as part of research efforts to learn more about their ecology.



COMMON SNAPPING TURTLE

(*Chelydra serpentina*)

The Snapping Turtle is the state reptile of New York and is common state-wide, including Fort Drum.



The Snapping Turtle is the largest freshwater turtle in New York commonly found with a carapace length up to 20 inches and weights of up to 35 lbs. The carapace contains three rows of backwards facing scutes forming a jagged appearance. The plastron is quite small providing little protection to its belly. The most noticeable characteristic of the Snapping Turtle is its massive head and oversized jaws. The species name “serpentina” refers to its long snake-like neck.

Though often maligned by people for being predatory to game fish and waterfowl, studies have shown that the Snapping Turtle is primarily a scavenger that eats prey that is already dead. They are generally omnivorous, eating both plant and animal matter.

Snapping Turtles are feared due to their powerful jaws and aggressive demeanor. However, this is their natural response when feeling threatened. Like all wildlife, it is always best to view these unique animals from a distance.

Snapping Turtles are often seen on the side of roads in the spring as they search for a place to lay their eggs. If a Snapping Turtle needs to be moved, it is best to pick it up by the rear of its carapace and hold it away from your body—never hold it by the tail as this may injure its spinal chord.

