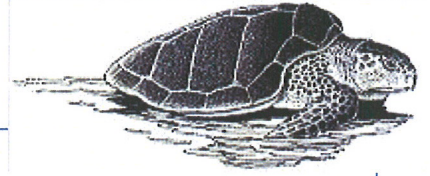


LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Humane, Effective Solutions to Human-Wildlife Conflicts

A Program of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals



Turtles

In cities, suburbs, and small towns across Massachusetts, people are noticing a change in their neighborhoods. Some think it's good. Some think it's bad. But everybody seems to be talking about it: more wild animals are making their homes in and around people's yards and houses, in parks and playgrounds, in business developments, even right on Main Street.

General Information

Massachusetts is home to 11 freshwater turtles and 5 sea turtles. Unfortunately, the majority of these species are in danger of disappearing. High egg and juvenile mortality rates, habitat destruction, water pollution and other human-caused threats (netting, commercial pet trade, etc.) have caused the endangerment of many turtle species. In Massachusetts 6 out of the 11 freshwater turtles are listed as threatened, endangered, or of special concern; and all 5 sea turtles are listed as either threatened or endangered.

Turtles belong to the family reptilian, and like all reptiles, are cold-blooded and depend on outside sources of heat to regulate their body temperature. Turtles have protective shells, scaly skin, good eyesight and hearing, and an excellent sense of smell. Depending on the environment a turtle lives in, they will have special characteristics that help them survive, such as claws for digging or webbed feet for swimming.

Sea turtles live in the ocean and eat a variety of foods ranging from jellyfish to crabs to seaweed. Freshwater turtles live in a variety of places including ponds, streams, wetlands, marshy meadows, bogs and wet woodlands and eat various types of insects, frogs, fish and carrion.

Whether a turtle lives in the ocean, pond, or marshy meadow, all turtles lay their eggs on land. Depending on the species, the female will lay anywhere between 4 to almost 100 eggs. The female digs a nest, lays her eggs, covers them and then leaves them to incubate on their own. The temperature of the sand/soil around the eggs plays the key role in determining the sex of the incubating eggs – cooler temperatures produce males and warmer temperatures produce females.

Possible Conflicts and Solutions

Turtles are not high-conflict animals and since most species found in Massachusetts are in danger of extinction, we should do whatever we can to help their species recover.

Most turtles require multiple habitats to fulfill all of their survival needs - a unique habitat is needed for breeding, for nesting, and for feeding. In order to access all of these habitats, turtles often need to cross roads. If you see a

turtle trying to cross a road, using common sense and street smarts, you can help it reach the side safely by carefully picking it up with a shovel and carrying it low to the ground to the side of the road or by gently encouraging it to move more quickly with a broom. Remember to help the turtle reach the side of the road to which it was heading.

If you see an injured turtle in the road, there are two things to consider: the turtle shell may be able to be repaired in an effort to save the turtle and/or the turtle may have eggs inside of it that may have a chance of survival. Both of these possibilities require immediate skilled veterinary attention. Safely and carefully, move the turtle from the road to a transport vehicle with a shovel or cardboard box and bring the injured turtle to the nearest wildlife clinic.

Public Health Concerns

Salmonellosis is a bacterial disease caused by the bacterium *Salmonella*. Salmonellosis is associated with reptiles, including lizards, snakes, turtles, and tortoises.

For more information about humanely solving human-wildlife conflicts or about the MSPCA's Living With Wildlife program, call (617) 522-7400, visit www.LivingWithWildlife.org, or email LivingWithWildlife@mspca.org.