

Massachusetts Animals – Painted Turtle

Facts at a Glance

TYPE OF ANIMAL

Reptile

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Chrysemys picta

FOUND WHERE

All across the continental
North America

HEIGHT/LENGTH

2.5 – 8 in. (7 - 25 cm)

WEIGHT

Average about 1lb or
300 – 500 g

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern



Bright markings through murky waters make this turtle a common and tell-tale sight. The classic red, orange, and yellow banded markings on their black or green-ish brown skin and shell give them their names. Painted turtles commonly have a smooth olive and gray toned shell and two distinctive yellow spots behind each eye. Like all turtles, they enjoy a good dip in the water. However, these turtles also enjoy sun-bathing and can spend upwards of 6 hours a day basking in the sun!

HABITAT

Painted turtles live in ponds, lakes, marshes, wetlands, and even slow-moving rivers, streams, or creeks. They prefer temperate waters and areas that provide soft, muddy bottoms with plenty of aquatic vegetation.

As they enjoy basking, they often flock to fallen logs or the rocky shorelines of ponds as well.

DIET

These turtles are omnivorous - meaning they eat both plants and meat.

They are important, opportunistic predators that will eat both living and dead animals. Their diet includes a wide variety of insects, small fish and crustaceans, vegetation, and algae. They don't have teeth, instead using their ridged jaws to serrate food.

LIFE & BEHAVIOUR

Painted turtles enjoy basking on a variety of objects, often logs or fallen trees, and often with other turtles. Despite their solitary nature, they can sometimes be seen in groups of 50 or more individuals on one log.

These turtles forage in the water after warming on logs, sleeping on the lakebed at night. They hibernate in colder months, often from October – March, rising in the spring to find a mate and lay eggs. Turtles can lay about 4 – 15 eggs each season.

FUN FACT

Turtles are not an animal in a shell, like a hermit crab. Their shell is actually a part of their body and grows with them!

Turtles shed their shell as they grow older and replace it with new growth.