

Painted turtle *Chrysemys picta*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Family: Emydidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An average painted turtle is five to seven inches long. Its smooth shell has a red, yellow and black color pattern. The female is larger than the male. An adult male has very long claws on its front feet. This turtle has yellow stripes on its head and dark coloring on the plastron (lower shell). The carapace (top shell) of the hatchling is keeled (has a ridge).

BEHAVIORS

The painted turtle may be found statewide in Illinois. It lives in shallow water bodies with many aquatic plants and a muddy bottom. Typical locations include ponds, marshes, ditches, lakes, streams and river pools. Although aquatic, the painted turtle is frequently found on land. It is often seen sunning on a log at the water's edge. It is active during the day. The mating season lasts from April to June. The male courts the female in a ritual involving stroking her head with the back of the long claws on his front feet. The female in turn strokes his front legs with her claws. After mating, the female digs a nest in soil a few feet from the edge of the water. Eight or nine eggs are deposited in the nest during the middle of the day. More than one clutch of eggs may be deposited by the female during the year. Hatchlings may be found after two to two and one-half months but usually overwinter in the nest. The painted turtle eats plants, insects, crayfish, mollusks (snails, slugs and others), fishes (live and dead) and amphibians.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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