



Wood Turtle: *Glyptemys insculpta* State Threatened

The Wood Turtle is a protected species in Virginia. It is unlawful to HARM, COLLECT, OR POSSESS THESE TURTLES unless one is permitted to do so.

To apply for a permit please see www.dwr.virginia.gov/permits



Note the sculptured scales of the top of shell (carapace).

Wood turtles are medium-sized (6-9" adult shell length) semi-terrestrial turtles found in streams or in riparian uplands on northern/northwestern Virginia. Their dull brown upper shell is very rough, and each section of the shell reflects growth rings that form an irregular pyramid. There is great variation in this trait, however, and the upper shell of older turtles may appear smooth. The bottom shell is yellow with black marginal blotches. Wood turtles have a black head, and dark brown extremities with characteristic yellow to burnt-orange skin patches on the neck and leg sockets.

Wood Turtles overwinter instream in deep pools with sandy bottoms and under submerged roots, branches, or logs. During warmer months, they wander the uplands mate-seeking, nesting, and foraging. In Virginia, females typically lay clutches of 7-14 eggs. Hatchlings typically emerge from June through August.

The wood turtle eats both animal and plant food items, including berries, herbs, algae, moss, fungi, grass, insects, mollusks, earthworms, dead fish, tadpoles, newborn mice and other turtles' eggs. It will forage on the ground, in the water, in herbaceous vegetation, and on logs.

If you have any questions concerning Wood Turtles, please contact John Kleopfer, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, at 804-829-6703 or John.Kleopfer@dwr.virginia.gov.



Bottom view (plastron) of a male Wood Turtle. The concaved plastron is characteristic of a male.