
Western Painted Turtle

(*Chrysemys picta*)

Class: *Reptilia*

Order: *Testudines*

Family: *Emyridae*

Characteristics:

The most widespread native turtle of North America. It lives in slow-moving fresh waters, from southern Canada to Louisiana and northern Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The adult painted turtle female is 10–25 cm (4–10 in) long; the male is smaller. The turtle's top shell is dark and smooth, without a ridge. Its skin is olive to black with red, orange, or yellow stripes on its extremities. The subspecies can be distinguished by their shells: the eastern has straight-aligned top shell segments; the midland has a large gray mark on the bottom shell; the southern has a red line on the top shell; the western has a red pattern on the bottom shell ([Washington Nature Mapping Program](#)).

Behavior:

Although they are frequently consumed as eggs or hatchlings by rodents, canines, and snakes, the adult turtles' hard shells protect them from most predators. Reliant on warmth from its surroundings, the painted turtle is active only during the day when it basks for hours on logs or rocks. During winter, the turtle hibernates, usually in the mud at the bottom of water bodies.

Reproduction:

The turtles mate in spring and autumn. Females dig nests on land and lay eggs between late spring and mid-summer. Hatched turtles grow until sexual maturity: 2–9 years for males, 6–16 for females.

Diet:

Wild: aquatic vegetation, algae, and small water creatures including insects, crustaceans, and fish

Zoo: Algae, duck food

Conservation:

While habitat loss and road killings have reduced the turtle's population, its ability to live in human-disturbed settings has helped it remain the most abundant turtle in North America.

FYI:

Painted turtles love to bask in the sun ([Arkive](#)), therefore you'll often see the zoo's turtle sunning itself on the rocks in the duck pond.



Range & Habitat:



Lifespan: up to 65 years in captivity, 55 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Named for the [bright coloration](#) on the bottom of its shell and on its neck & legs.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

