

## ENDANGERED TURTLES

On 23 May 2019, World Turtle Day, Canada Post released stamps featuring two species of endangered turtles. The Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) is found in central-southwest Nova Scotia and in the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence region of southern Ontario and southwestern Quebec. Although the Spotted Turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) now inhabits only isolated pockets of central and southern Ontario, it was likely once distributed more widely.

Like all eight of Canada's freshwater turtle species, these species play a vital role in the wetland ecosystems they inhabit as predators of insects and other invertebrates and as scavengers that consume dead plants and animals. These turtles have been assessed as endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Did you know?

- The Blanding's Turtle has a mouth that curves slightly upward, making it appear as if it is always smiling.
- Blanding's Turtles hibernate from fall until early spring, partially burying themselves in the mud or sand at the bottom of shallow bodies of water that become ice covered.
- They are one of the longest-lived freshwater turtles, able to survive and reproduce well into their 80s.
- The Spotted Turtle is one of Ontario's smallest turtle species, with a shell less than 13 cm in length.
- Spotted Turtles are the first of Ontario's turtle species to emerge from hibernation in early spring, thanks to their tolerance for cold.
- Slow to mature, they may be capable of living for more than 100 years.

Blanding's and Spotted turtles both reproduce slowly, so every individual lost has a severe impact on the overall population. For this reason, the mortality of turtles on roadways poses a significant threat to both species. Other threats include habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive plants affecting their habitats, and illegal collection. Thanks to conservation efforts, however, there is still hope for their recovery.

These stunning stamps, designed by Adrian Horvath and illustrated by Sarah Still, are available in booklets of 10. The Official First Day Cover is cancelled in Maitland Bridge, Nova Scotia, near the province's Blanding's turtle population.

