



Looking for Freshwater Turtle Sightings!
Let us know where you've seen turtles in the Columbia Valley

For Immediate Release

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Do you know what animal enjoys basking on logs during summer, lives twenty to thirty years in the wild, and spends its winters hibernating in mud while being covered by up to half a metre of ice? If you guessed the Western Painted Turtle, then you are right! These turtles get their name from their strikingly beautiful colors. They have bright yellow stripes on their head, neck, legs and tail, as well as red decorating their shells. The Painted Turtle is the only native freshwater turtle found in BC, and lucky for us they reside right here in the Columbia Valley.

While we know they are found here, no monitoring or inventory work has ever been conducted for the Western Painted Turtle in the Columbia Valley, so it is unknown how many turtles reside here, or where their important habitat areas (such as breeding grounds) are located. This year, the Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners (CWSP) are initiating a new turtle conservation project. The goal of the project is to learn the locations of any important habitat areas for turtles in the Columbia Valley, in large part by using sighting and observational information provided by the public. This project is being led by local biologist Rachel Darvill. She and her team will assess possible threats to turtle habitat areas and suggest potential improvements (mitigations) that can be used to help enhance turtle habitat in the future.

While you are recreating in the wetlands or valley this year, you may come across turtles basking on logs, rocks, or along pond edges on sunny warm days. Or perhaps you have seen turtles in the past? The CWSP are requesting that anyone who has seen a turtle in the Columbia Valley (Canal Flats to Donald) to please submit their observational records to them. This includes past and present turtle sightings, and whether they were seen dead or alive. In order to submit your observational records, or if you have any questions about this program, please email cvpaintedturtle@gmail.com.

Painted Turtles are the most common freshwater turtles in North America, but they are also an at-risk species that is 'blue-listed' in the province of B.C. They suffer from habitat loss, road mortality and predation by animals such as skunks, coyotes, raccoons and crows. If you see a turtle, please enjoy it from a distance, but never take one home as a pet. This project is facilitated by the Kootenay Conservation Program and funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Columbia Basin Trust.