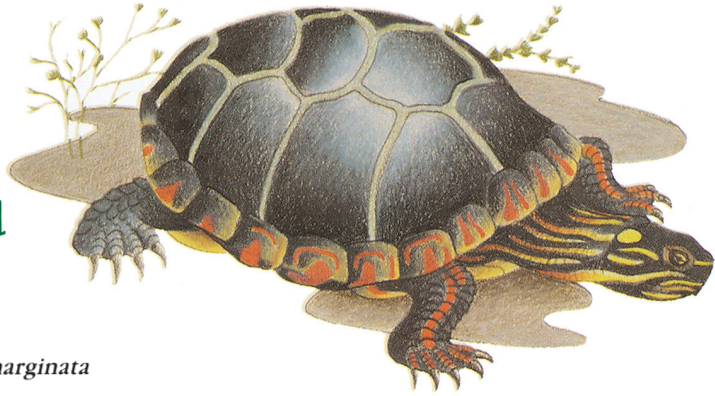


Midland Painted Turtle

Chrysemys picta marginata



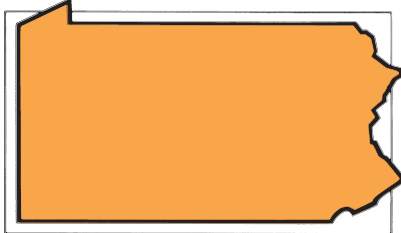
General characteristics. The attractive painted turtle is the most widespread of any in North America. One subspecies with intergrades, which may show characteristics from other subspecies in adjoining areas, is found in Pennsylvania. Not a particularly large turtle, it attains adult sizes of four to six inches along the upper shell, or carapace.

Identification. The carapace is olive or black, oval, smooth, and somewhat flattened. Red and black markings on the edges of the shell, in the form of bars or crescent-shaped patterns, are good identifying characteristics. The plastron is an unmistakable yellow or red with a dark blotch in its center. Each side of the head is marked with bright-yellow spots and stripes (See Figure IV-9), and yellow and red stripes define the neck, legs and tail. The upper jaw is notched.



Figure IV-9
Bright yellow spots and stripes mark the side of the head of the painted turtle.

Range. Its range extends from southern Quebec and Ontario in Canada southward to Tennessee. It misses most of Virginia and North Carolina. In Pennsylvania, the painted turtle is found from border to border in all directions.



Habitat. It is fond of basking and often is observed sunning itself on a large rock beside a slow-moving stream or river. Shallow areas of lakes or ponds also attract the painted turtle. It particularly likes streams with soft bottoms, generously sprinkled with vegetation and dotted with submerged logs.

Reproduction. The male painted turtle is sexually mature at two to five years of age. The female matures from four to eight years of age. One to two clutches, consisting of two to 20 elliptically shaped eggs, are laid in May to July on land in a flask-like nest about four inches deep. The eggs incubate for 10 to 11 weeks before splitting open to reveal hatchlings an inch or less in shell length. The young may spend the first winter in the nest.

Food. While young, the painted turtle is basically carnivorous but becomes more herbivorous with age. It eats insects, crayfish and mollusks in the beginning, then turns to a variety of aquatic plants.