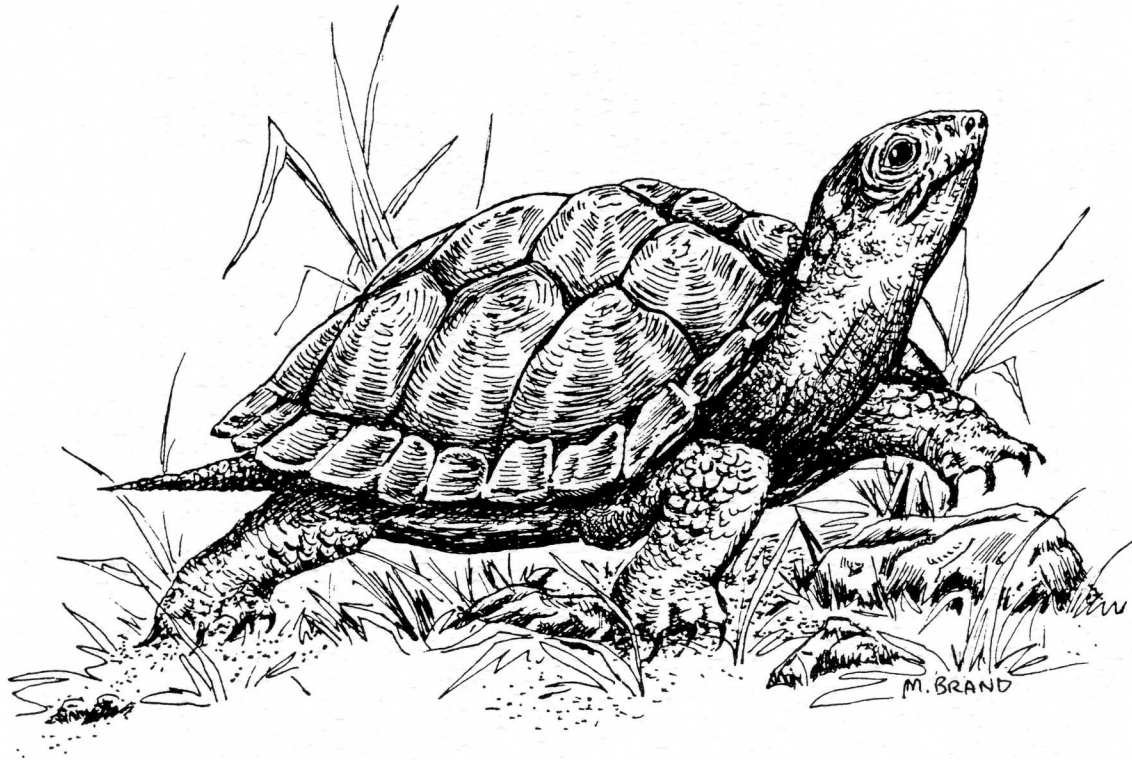


River Bend Naturalist Notebook

at

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, Minnesota

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WOOD TURTLE

(*Clemmys insculpta*)

Wood turtles, as their name implies, are a species found primarily in the woods and are considered the most terrestrial of all Minnesota turtles; however, it does spend some time in the water.

The wood turtle is considered rare in Minnesota because of its scattered appearance. In Faribault, a wood turtle was found in August of 1984 along the Straight River. Prior to that finding, the last record in Rice County was listed as October 7, 1940 in Northfield. Otherwise in Minnesota, records indicate a scattered appearance around small streams entering the St. Croix River in eastern Pine County, and a recorded sighting in Hennepin County (believed to be transported in) and the sighting in Rice County.

Wood turtles are omnivorous, meaning they consume both plants and animals. Mollusks and insects are prominent on its list of foods, although one report indicates finding two birds in its stomach. As is true with other turtles, it uses its forefeet and jaws to tear apart food.

This specie of turtle is capable of producing a sound

uncommon to the turtle world. Males sing a subdued distant note comparable to a tea kettle and audible at a distance of 30 to 40 feet. Females are capable of producing a low whistle which is believed to be for breeding. Eggs are laid during the month of June in mid-afternoon in sand in lots of 2 to 12.

Wood turtles are considered rare in Minnesota because of their scattered appearance. It has not been found in Michigan, Wisconsin, or Iowa.

Due to its rarity, the DNR - Division of Non-Game Wildlife - is monitoring its existence. The last record submitted from Rice County in 1984 was a wood turtle estimated to be between 15 and 20 years old. One individual in captivity lived to be 58 years old.

Predation of wood turtles occurs in young specimens, mostly by fish. Traffic is considered to be its worst enemy since it wanders considerable distances on land, although wood turtles possess an unusual ability to climb. However, the absence of reports of it being killed by traffic in this area is an indicator of its rarity. This species is also being monitored by River Bend. If you see a wood turtle, please call the Nature Center office.