

Western Painted Turtle - *Chrysemys picta bellii*

Abundance: Rare

Status: NSS4 (Bc)

NatureServe: G5T5 S4

Population Status: Vulnerable due to restricted distribution, but extirpation is not eminent.

Limiting Factor: Habitat: restricted to low elevation habitats within the Missouri River drainage.

Comment:

Introduction

In Wyoming, Western Painted Turtles range in the eastern counties below 6,000 feet and are abundant near Wheatland, the Powder River, and Muddy Creek in Laramie County. Western Painted Turtles forage in water and feed on fish, aquatic plants, insects, crayfish, mollusks, and amphibians (Baxter and Stone 1985, Stebbins 2003). They are most active from March through October. Western Painted Turtles are diurnal and spend the night at the bottom of a water body or on a partially submerged object (Ernst et al. 1994). They often are found sunning themselves on banks or logs at the edge of the water (Baxter and Stone 1985, Stebbins 2003). Western Painted Turtles overwinter in the soft bottoms of waterbodies, in muskrat lodges or burrows, underneath overhanging dirt banks, or on land in floodplain woods or pastures (Ernst et al. 1994). Females deposit 1 to 22 eggs in soft soil (Stebbins 2003); nesting usually occurs from late May to July (Ernst et al. 1994). In Wyoming, hatchlings may overwinter in the nest and emerge in April or May (Baxter and Stone 1985, Ernst et al. 1994). Western Painted Turtles have been common in the pet trade, but have become less common because they sometimes carry salmonella (Baxter and Stone 1985).

Habitat

Western Painted Turtles live in swampy habitats, marshes, small lakes, ponds, ditches, and muddy streams (Baxter and Stone 1985, Stebbins 2003). They prefer areas with slow-moving shallow water, soft bottoms, basking sites, and aquatic vegetation (Ernst et al. 1994).

Problems

- h Lack of basic information on the species presence, distribution, and ecology in Wyoming.
- h This species has restricted habitats in the state, therefore disturbance to these areas may affect the range of the species in Wyoming.

Conservation Actions

- h Survey and monitor population distribution, status, and habitat associations.
- h Develop management recommendations based on resulting data.

Monitoring/Research

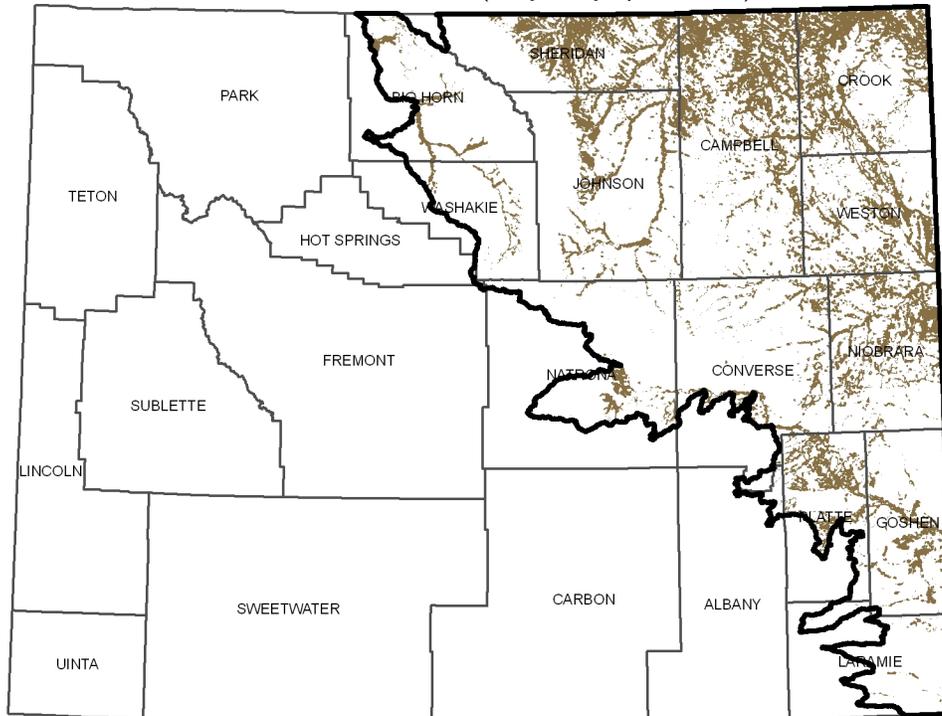
Conduct baseline surveys to gain a better understanding of Western Painted Turtle distribution in Wyoming.

Recent Developments

Reptiles have received increased attention in Wyoming. Incidental observations are encouraged to be reported to the herpetology program.

References

- Ernst, C.H., J.E. Lovich, and R.W. Barbour. 1994. Turtles of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London. 578pp.
- Stebbins, R.C. 2003. A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians. Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 336 pp.
- Baxter, G.T. and M.D. Stone. 1985. Amphibians and Reptiles of Wyoming. Second Edition. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne. 137pp.

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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.