

# Painted Turtle

## *Chrysemys picta*

### Natural History

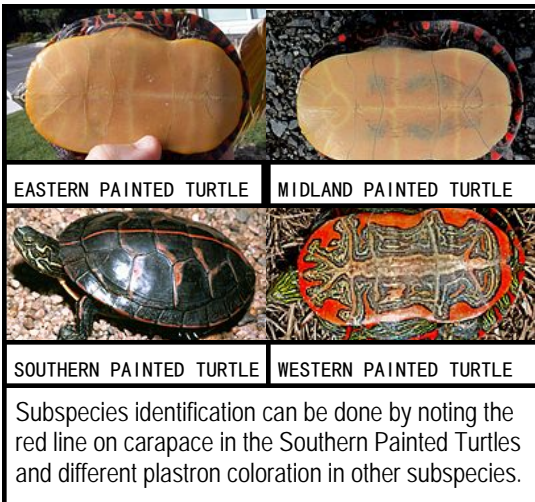


**Description:** The Western Painted Turtle has a smooth dark carapace (top shell) and a red patterned plastron (underside shell). Its skin is covered in green and yellow lines. Painted Turtle females grow to be 4-10 inches long. The male is smaller than the female. Males also have longer fore claws.

**Vocalizations:** Painted Turtles use touch to communicate, but may hiss when threatened.

**Breeding:** Male Painted Turtles will stroke the females face with their long claws during courtship. Nesting occurs between late May and mid July. Eggs are typically laid in sandy soil close to water. The female digs the nest with her hind feet and lays 4-12 white, elliptical eggs. The temperature in the nest influences whether the young are male or female. Young turtles reach maturity at 3-5 years for males and 6-10 years for females.

**Distribution:** There are four subspecies of Painted Turtle, which range from Canada to Mexico. In Minnesota and Wisconsin most are Western Painted Turtles. The four subspecies may interbreed and it is not uncommon to find Painted Turtles with the characteristics of more than one subspecies.



**Habitat:** Painted Turtles live in fresh water, with muddy bottoms, aquatic vegetation and basking areas. Western Painted Turtles prefer streams and lakes but also live in pasture and roadside ponds.

**Diet:** The turtles diet consists of live or dead plants and animals. The Western subspecies eats proportionally more insects in the early summer and more plants later in the year. They even eat the hard-coated White Waterlily seeds and help disperse this plant species.

**Lifespan:** Young turtles may be aged by growth rings on their shells, but this becomes unreliable in older turtles. Recent studies in Michigan indicate that Painted Turtles can live more than 55 years!



Range Map: Red is Eastern; Yellow is Midland; Green is Southern and Blue is Western.

Map and subspecies photograph source: Wikipedia

**Conservation Status:** Common in MN and WI.