

yellow mud turtle *Kinosternon flavescens*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Family: Kinosternidae

ILLINOIS STATUS endangered, native

FEATURES

The yellow mud turtle averages four to five inches in length. Its soft parts are black or gray. It has paired barbels (whiskerlike projections) on the chin and neck. The barbels and front half of the lower jaw have a yellow tinge. The carapace (upper shell) is flattened and dark brown in color. The plastron (lower shell) is double-hinged.

BEHAVIORS

The yellow mud turtle may be found in central Illinois along the Illinois River and in northwestern Illinois along the Mississippi River. It lives in sand prairies in shallow ponds and sloughs. This turtle is aquatic. It buries itself in sand in the heat of summer and hibernates there in winter. It excretes a bad-smelling musk when disturbed. Mating occurs in spring. The female deposits three to seven eggs in a soil nest in summer. Hatching occurs in late summer. This turtle feeds while walking along the bottom of ponds and sloughs. It eats snails, insects, fishes, crayfish, tadpoles, plants and mussels.

The yellow mud turtle's decline is due to habitat destruction, mainly for agricultural use, land conversion to pine plantations, road construction, lock and dam construction, dredging and lowered water tables.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

sand prairie

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