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Massachusetts Turtle Roadkill Monitoring Project

Thank you for volunteering to assist in the second statewide initiative to document turtle roadway mortality in Massachusetts! Overall, the major themes are 1) be safe, and 2) keep it simple. How many road killed turtles were there? The rest is details.

1) **BE SAFE!!!** Safety is our primary concern. If the site seems dangerous, abandon the site. Park in a safe place, wear bright colored/reflective clothing, survey from 10 AM to 2 PM to avoid rush hour traffic. No surveys should be conducted in low visibility conditions/rain events. If you are not comfortable getting out of the car and surveying your site, then don't! Survey in adult pairs (no children please), with one partner watching for oncoming traffic. Walk on the outside of guardrail, curb, or shoulder, and always face oncoming traffic. Visually inspect edge of roadway and shoulder for turtle carcasses. Feel free to call your local Highway Department to let them know you'll be on that stretch of road (they should also be able to lend you a safety vest). SAFETY FIRST!!!

2) Protocol. Visit the site three times from May to June: a) once during the last week of May; b) once during the second week of June; c) once during the last week of June (Note: for those of you following a more rigorous sampling regime, disregard the previous statement). During each visit, count the number of all species of turtles present (dead and alive) on the road and road shoulder. Record the number, species, and age (adult, juvenile, hatchling) of all turtle carcasses. Photograph them in a pile. Note-cards should be used to identify species, survey site, and survey date. Use best judgment in determining whether partial carcasses represent a single turtle. Remove the carcasses observed during each survey and discard them (in the wetland) so they will not be counted during later surveys. If dangerous traffic conditions are present, do not collect specimens from the roadway. Your life is more important than having all specimens removed from the roadway. If you cannot make it to your site(s) during a specified survey week, please let us know, and we'll try to get it surveyed. Report data at: <http://linkinglandscapes.info> by September 30.

3) Identification. Most of the turtles will be painted turtles. For "painted", under 3-4" carapace (shell covering top of turtle's body) length is usually a juvenile. Before filling out the online reporting form (<http://www.linkinglandscapes.info/turtle-roadkill-surveys.html>), volunteers can email David Paulson a photo of the specimen (in your hand or next to ruler) to verify which species and age-class the species seems to be. If possible, group the specimens together in one photo (by species if possible), though do not risk your life trying to obtain a specimen from the roadway. If there is traffic, do not go into the roadway or try to stop traffic just to include a specimen in your 'group photo'.

4) You'll also see dead snakes, frogs, birds, and small mammals. These can be tallied en masse, not necessarily by species, and entered with the rest.

5) Optional: Conduct one survey during the first two weeks of September. September is an optional follow-up survey period to look for hatchlings, and whether there appears to be nesting habitat present.

6) Beware of poison ivy!

Contact Info

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