

Bog Turtles and the Department of Defense



Picture by: J.D. Kleopfer

The Bog Turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) is the smallest North American turtle. It is named after its discoverer Henry Muhlenberg, who was the brother of Revolutionary War hero, General “Devil Pete” Muhlenberg.

Description: Adults are typically 3.0 to 3.5 inches (7.5 to 9 cm) in length, with a brown to black carapace (top shell). One or two orange (occasionally yellow) patches are present on each side of the head.

Range: Northern Population occurs from western Massachusetts and New York to northern Delaware and Maryland. The Southern Population occurs from southwest Virginia to eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina to northeast Georgia. There is a noticeable gap in the range between Maryland and southwestern Virginia. It is estimated that the range of this species was reduced by approximately 90% over the course of the 20th century.



Source: IUCN

Habitat: Typical habitats include soft, uncompacted soils in stream-head sedge meadows, spring-fed sphagnum bogs, fens, and open shrubby swamps, and nearby small streams.

Behavior: Bog Turtles mate from late April to early June. Females nest and lay eggs in sphagnum moss typically from May to July, and the eggs hatch from late July to September. Adults take 5 to 8 years to reach maturity, and growth subsides shortly thereafter. Bog Turtles are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on a variety of invertebrate and small vertebrate animal prey, as well as seeds, fruits, herbs, grasses, sedges, and shrubs. Hibernation typically occurs in underground cavities created by muskrats or tree roots.

Longevity may exceed 30 years.

Conservation Status: The Northern Population of the Bog Turtle is federally listed as threatened while the Southern Population is listed as Similarity of Appearance (threatened) under the Endangered Species Act. It is also listed as state-endangered or threatened in 12 states. NatureServe lists this species as G3 –Vulnerable, and the IUCN ranks the species as Critically Endangered.

Threats: Habitat loss, alteration, and fragmentation, collection for the pet trade, disease, road mortality, and predation of eggs and hatchlings are all threats to this species.

Occurrence on Military Lands

Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on two military installations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.	Up to an additional 5 military installations across its range.

