

TURTLES & ROADS



Encounters with vehicles on roadways can be a significant source of mortality for many species of aquatic and terrestrial turtles. Turtles may cross roads to move between sources of water, to search for locations to lay eggs, and to search for breeding partners. Helping turtles cross roads is a legitimate conservation measure but should only be done when you do not put yourself or others at risk.



Tips to help turtles cross safely



- Only assist if a turtle is in imminent danger of traffic and it is safe to move it. Be aware of traffic or other hazards.
- Pick up the turtle firmly with both hands across the middle of its body. DO NOT pick a turtle up by the tail.
- Place the turtle across the road in the direction it was heading.
- Turtles may bite, scratch, or defecate when handled. Be careful as some species such as snapping turtles and softshell turtles may turn their heads completely to the side to bite.
- If available use a broom, shovel, or large stick to encourage turtles that are too dangerous to handle to move out of the roadway.
- Resist the urge to move the turtle to an “appropriate area” for release. Many turtles have home ranges with burrows and other features that they need for survival. Moving them out of their home range could result in their death from predators, exposure, or other factors.

Most DOD installations have an Environmental Branch or Natural Resources Section that can provide more information about turtle conservation or how to handle turtle encounters.



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