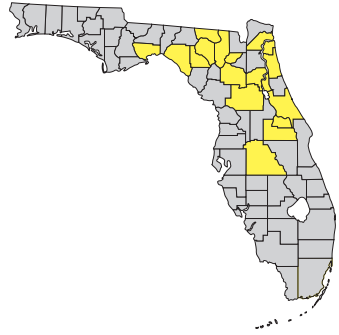


SPOTTED TURTLE

Clemmys guttata

Order: Testudines
Family: Emydidae
FNAI Ranks: G5/S3?
U.S. Status: None
FL Status: None



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Description: A small (to 5 in. = 127 mm), mostly black turtle with bright yellow to orange spots on head and shell. Each large scale of upper shell (carapace) with one to several small yellowish dots, though these may fade in older animals and be obscure to absent in hatchlings. Carapace smooth, lacking a central ridge over back in both adults and hatchlings. Lower shell (plastron) lacks a hinge and has areas of yellow to salmon pink toward

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midline and on borders of moderate to large black blotches that may cover half to most of each scale. Skin of legs usually charcoal above and pink to orange below.

Similar Species: The lower shell of box turtles (*Terrapene*) has a moveable hinge, and the yellow pattern on the carapace tends more to streaks than isolated dots; hatchlings, which appear similar to spotted turtle, have a pronounced ridge along the back.

Habitat: Bogs, swamps, shallow wooded ponds and streams, ditches; prefers slow-moving or still waters with a soft bottom and abundant vegetation; often associated with sphagnum moss; very secretive, remaining hidden most of time.

Seasonal Occurrence: Secretive most of year; nearly all observations are from March - early May, when individuals tend to wander overland.

Florida Distribution: Very patchy, with isolated occurrences in panhandle (St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Wakulla County) and north-central Florida, south to Green Swamp (Polk County); most records centered in northern peninsula, including St. Johns River basin. Some question exists as to whether central Florida records are natural or represent released pets.

Range-wide Distribution: Atlantic Coastal Plain from Florida to Maine, and westward across northern U.S. and southern Canada to Lake Michigan.

Conservation Status: May have been reduced in some regions by collecting for pet trade. Florida records are known from at least one national wildlife refuge (St. Marks) and one state wildlife management area (Green Swamp).

Protection and Management: Protect wooded wetlands and adjacent 0.25 mi. (0.4 km) upland buffers in northern and central Florida from drainage, excessive groundwater withdrawal, development, timbering or forestry, soil and groundcover disturbance, and pollution.

Selected References: Ashton and Ashton 1991, Barnwell et al. 1997, Bartlett and Bartlett 1999, Conant and Collins 1991, Ernst et al. 1994, Georgia DNR 1999, Moler (ed.) 1992.