

BY *the* NUMBERS

Turtles

Instantly recognizable by all, turtles are a much-beloved resident of Massachusetts, but how much do you really know about them? For example, did you know they are mostly omnivores, eating everything from weeds and aquatic plants to fish, snails, and worms, depending on the species? And although many (but not all!) turtle species live in water, they all must breathe air and lay eggs on land. As a group, turtles face many conservation challenges, with steep population declines driven by habitat loss and over-collection. Here are more fascinating facts about turtles that you may not know:



Eastern box turtle

6

SPECIES

of freshwater turtles are listed as Endangered, Threatened, or of Special Concern under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. All sea turtles found in U.S. waters are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

45-50

POUNDS PER SQUARE INCH

is the average bite force of a snapping turtle, which may seem low (the average force of the human bite is 100-150 pounds), but don't be fooled! Their jaws are designed for cutting and slicing and can easily lop off your finger if you get too close!

1,500

POUNDS

is the heaviest a leatherback sea turtle will grow—the species can reach up to eight feet long! If you're lucky you might see this giant in the waters off Cape Cod or the Islands.

3-4"

is the average size of Massachusetts's smallest (and rarest) turtle species, the bog turtle.



20-40

EGGS

is the average number laid per nest by the common snapping turtle, while the rare bog turtle usually lays only three.



Loggerhead turtle

10

SPECIES

of freshwater turtles are native to Massachusetts. In addition, **five** species of sea turtles have been found offshore or stranded on beaches.

476

is the number of cold-stunned sea turtles rescued in 2016 by Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary's Sea Turtle Rescue Program—the third highest year in the program's history. With more than 1,100 rescues, 2014 still stands as the record year.



There are many ways you can help the turtles of Massachusetts, like preserving their habitat, leaving wild turtles in the wild, protecting them at road crossings, properly disposing of balloons and plastic bags, or supporting Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary's Sea Turtle Rescue Program. Learn about what you can do at massaudubon.org/bythenumbers.