

WESTERN POND TURTLE

STATUS

Common name:	Western Pond Turtle
Scientific name:	<i>Clemmys marmorata</i>
State status:	Species of Special Concern
Federal status:	Species of Concern



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NATURAL HISTORY

The western pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*), also known as the Pacific pond turtle or Pacific mud turtle, is one of two fresh-water turtles native to California. Two subspecies of western pond turtle have been described; the northwestern pond turtle (*C. m. marmorata*) found north of the American River, and the southwestern pond turtle (*C. m. pallida*) found from the coastal area south of San Francisco. A zone of intergradation occurs between the two subspecies from the Jan Joaquin Valley to the south and east San Francisco Bay Area. Throughout their range, the colors and markings of western pond turtles vary, but many specimens exhibit a marbling pattern on their carapace and skin.

Western pond turtles are habitat generalists, preferring slow-moving rivers and streams (*e.g.* in oxbows), lakes, reservoirs, permanent and ephemeral wetlands, and stock ponds. Despite their name, pond turtles will regularly utilize upland terrestrial habitat, especially for oviposition (females), mate seeking (males), overwintering, aseasonal terrestrial habitat use, and overland dispersal. Overwintering individuals bury themselves beneath the leaf litter, or will hibernate in the soft muddy bottom of a stream. Being ectotherms, they require emergent basking sites such as mud banks, rocks, logs, and root wads to thermoregulate their body temperature.

Their omnivorous diet includes adult and larval aquatic insects, terrestrial grasshoppers and aerial flies off the water's surface, beetles, fish, worms, crustaceans, amphibian (egg masses, tadpoles and adults), and infrequently aquatic plants, including algae, yellow pond lily fronds, willow and alder catkins, inflorescences, tulle, and cattail roots. Western pond turtles are also scavengers, feeding on carcasses of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish species.

THREATS TO THE SPECIES

1. Habitat loss due to development, agriculture, dams, water diversions, and fire suppression
2. Overexploitation
3. Introduced exotic species: largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*), red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)



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