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## A LIST OF THE TURTLES, SNAKES AND BATRACHIANS OF MANITOBA.\*

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THE PRAIRIE MUD TURTLE OR PAINTED TURTLE,  
*Chrysemys marginata bellii* (Gray).

This is the common turtle of Manitoba. It is a small inoffensive species, readily recognized by its size (about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches along the back—115 mm.), the bright red spots on the edge of its shell and the dark irregular blotch or cloud on the plastron, which last most readily distinguishes it from its near relative, the Eastern Mud Turtle.

I found it rather common in the Red river, near Winnipeg, and about Carberry in the large ponds and streams. It is also reported from many points in the prairie region—Boissevain, (A. S. Barton); Riding Mountain, (C. C. Helliwell); Austin, (Dr. Shaw).

Evidently, it is of general distribution in the south-west quarter of Manitoba, but is unknown at Shoal Lake or anywhere on the east side of Lake Manitoba. Richardson records it occurring at the south end of Lake Winnipeg and gives "Asaté" as its Chippewa name.

There is no available information on its breeding habits, but the female of the kindred species *picta* lays eggs during June, in a dry sunny bank, often remote from water. The eggs are white, leathery and nearly round; they measure about one inch (26 mm.) through, and number about half-a-dozen. All the eggs of the season are laid at one time and hidden in a single hole. This hole is three or four inches deep, scooped out by the hind feet of the mother; the eggs are left in several layers and covered with earth and leaves, so carefully as to be difficult of detection. The mother takes no further interest in the nest. The young hatch out after two

weeks, crawl to the nearest swamp, and shift for themselves.

"The process of reproduction by laying is not commenced before the eleventh year . . . . . enough has been seen to warrant the assumption that from the eleventh to the fourteenth year is about the age at which most, if not all our native fresh water turtles lay their eggs for the first time; . . . . . not one of our turtles makes more than a single nest [each year]. They deposit all the eggs at once. The Painted Turtle has an almost identical period of incubation with the Snapping Turtle, namely, from the 11th to the 25th of June." [L. Agassiz, on Painted Turtle, 1857].

To this, Professor H. A. Surface adds (Turtles of Penna. 1908, p. 149): "The Painted Turtle is known to lay only from five to seven eggs a year, although more may be found within the body at any time. These do not all come to maturity during the same year."

The eggs are much preyed upon by skunks, raccoons, gray squirrels, etc., which search them out and devour them with keen relish.

The natural food of the turtle is insects, worms and fish, but it is known to add fruit and leaves to its diet.

In the autumn, it buries itself in the mud, at the bottom of a pond, below the frost line, and remains torpid till the following May.

The first sharp frost at Cos Cob, Connecticut, came about the beginning of December (?) one year. There was no snow; the ice was very clear; looking through it I saw on the bottom of the lake in three feet of water 20 or 30 Painted Turtles slowly crawling in one direction; that is, toward the inlet of the lake. They were not apparently associated.

The reappearance of the Mud Turtle is a sign of spring at its flood; but the Scriptural line, alluding to the "voice of the turtle in our land," refers not to

\*The nomenclature is that of Stejneger and Barbour's Check List of N. A. Batrach. and Reptiles, 1917.

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