Threatened and Endangered Species in Forests of Wisconsin

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WISCONSIN
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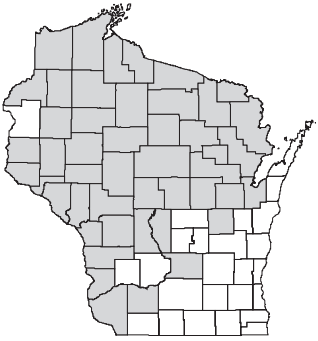
Wood Turtle

(Clemmys insculpta)

Federal Status: Not Listed
State Status: Endangered

Description: Each segment of the wood turtle's 6- to 8-inch shell looks like the wood-grained cross-section of a tree branch, complete with growth rings and usually displaying yellowish rays radiating from the center. The shell also has a noticeable dorsal (top) rib. Its bottom shell is yellow with black blotches. The wood turtle has a black head and brown limbs highlighted by yellow or occasionally orange skin on the throat and forelegs.

Habitat: This semi-aquatic turtle shares its time between clean rivers and streams dominated by sand or gravel substrates and adjacent lowland

hardwood forests. The wood turtle may even range into some upland forest types, remaining away from water for several months at a time. Usually, however, it doesn't travel more than several hundred yards from water.

Forestry Considerations: Because wood turtle activity is quite variable, it is difficult to make sound recommendations about terrestrial forestry activities. A major concern is to avoid heavy equipment use or timber stockpiling in sandy soil openings within 100 feet of rivers and streams occupied by wood turtles. These may be critical nesting sites. These sites can be inspected quickly by looking for eggshell fragments left on the surface by turtle nest predators. If eggshells are found, these sites should be avoided between late May through September. Following *Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality* would benefit this species.