

# Redbelly Turtle (*Pseudemys rubriventris*)

## *Pennsylvania Threatened Species*

State Rank: S2 (imperiled) Global Rank: G5 (secure)

### Identification

The redbelly turtle (*Pseudemys rubriventris*) is one of Pennsylvania's largest turtles. The carapace, or shell is brown to black with reddish bars on some scutes. The plastron, or belly is pink to red and the head, neck and legs are covered with bright yellow lines in younger individuals. Markings may become less obvious with age and some older turtles are almost completely black above with few distinguishing characteristics. Confusing species are painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) and the introduced red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta*). Painted turtles can be distinguished by the light borders along the carapace seams and smaller size in adults. Red-eared sliders are similar in size and coloration, however the presence of a red "ear patch" can sometimes be used to identify this species. Like the redbelly turtle, painted turtles and sliders may darken with age making it difficult to differentiate between the species.



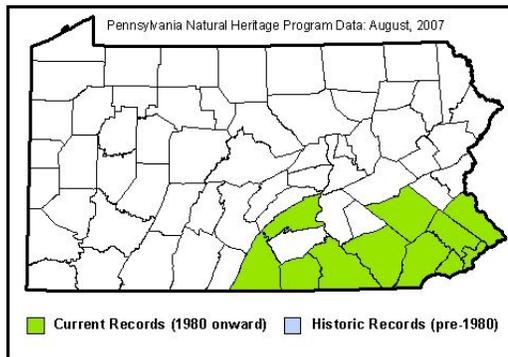
Photo: Jason Ambler

### Habitat

This aquatic species is primarily found in large water bodies including lakes, ponds, marshes, slow-moving rivers and creeks. Redbelly turtles prefer deeper water with sandy or muddy substrate and require aquatic vegetation. This species also depends on abundant basking sites and spend a great deal of time perched on logs and downed trees. Nesting sites are in upland habitat and usually within 100 meters of the water, though they have been known to nest up to 250m from water. Eggs are laid in sandy or loamy soil, in clutches of 10 to 12.

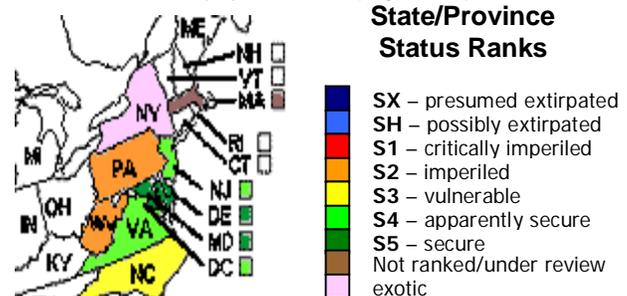
### Status

*Pseudemys rubriventris* ranges from New York to North Carolina and has been introduced into some areas around the United States.



### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (August 2007)



The redbelly turtle is listed as a threatened species in our state. Though we are on the edge of it's range, many factors contribute to the threatened status of this species in Pennsylvania. In the late 1800's, this species was captured and sold as a food item in large metropolitan markets. The population in the east was significantly reduced through collection. Currently, threats to this species include loss of habitat through development, reductions in site and water quality, and threats from exotic species. The range of the red-eared slider is expanding and the redbelly turtle may compete with the exotic slider in some areas. Road mortality is an issue for females traveling away from water to lay eggs. Also, nest predators such as raccoon and fox increase with forest fragmentation and can significantly decrease nesting success of this species. More information is needed on the life history of this species and factors affecting populations in the state.

### References

- Hulse, A.C., C.J. McCoy and E.J. Censky. 2001. Amphibians and Reptiles of Pennsylvania and the Northeast. Cornell University Press, New York. 419pp.
- NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2007. Version 6.2. Arlington, Virginia. Website: [www.natureserve.org/explorer](http://www.natureserve.org/explorer). (Accessed: 13 August 2007)
- PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Website. Wild Resource Conservation Fund, Endangered and Threatened Species in Pennsylvania. Redbelly Turtle: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wrcf/rbturt.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wrcf/rbturt.htm).



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program