

1988 BLANDING'S TURTLE VOLUNTEER SURVEY
SUMMARY AND RESULTS

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The 1988 Blanding's Turtle Volunteer Survey was recently entered into the Heritage Database. A total of 142 new EOs from 22 counties were added (Table 1.). The current EO total for Blanding's turtles is 403 from 34 counties (Figure 1.). Fillmore and Freeborn Counties were added from this year's survey.

The number of reports exceeded 250. Forty four of the reports were updates of previous records. Twenty seven of the reports were not mapped because of a dubious description or poor locality information. There were also a number of duplicate reports that were mapped as 1 EO.

Anoka, Isanti, Ramsey, and Sherburne Counties accounted for over 50 percent of the records from this year's survey. The variation in county reporting levels is dependent on observer interest, as much as, the density of the turtle populations.

The survey forms worked well when properly used. Over 10 percent of the records were not mapped for various reasons. Another 30 to 50 percent would not have been mapped if I had strictly followed my guidelines on localities and descriptions. A larger number of reports had "sighting only" marked, but no written description. There were reports that indicated photos, but there were no photos attached to the report. Some of the records had legal description that was different from the map or written description. Any of these errors should have eliminated the report from mapping. I tried to sort through these problems and make a correct judgement.

Future reports should be scrutinized at a higher level. The current number of EOs does not justify the addition of questionable records. I have attached a detailed instruction sheet to help improve the quality of the reports. A greater emphasis should be placed on documentation by photos or DOR specimens.

Future surveys should be aimed at the fringe counties of the current known distribution. There should be Blanding's turtles in Blue Earth, Carver, Goodhue, Houston, McLeod, Nicolett, Sibley, Waseca, and possibly Murray or Lyon Counties.

Table 1. 1988 Blanding's Turtle Summary by County.

County	New Records	Not Mapped	Updates
Anoka	34	8	10
Benton	1		
Cass	3	3	3
Chisago	7	1	3
Crow Wing	9	1	
Dakota	1		
Fillmore	1		
Freeborn	1		
(Goodhue		1	
Hennepin	3	3	
Isanti	19	2	7
Morrison	3	1	
Olmsted	1		
Pine	6		
Ramsey	10	1	1
Sherburne	18	2	12
Stearns	6	2	2
Steele	2		
Wabasha	3		2
Washington	10	3	3
Winona			1
Wright	4	1	
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Totals	142	27	44

Counties with previous records but not reported in 1988.

Aitkin	Hubbard	Kanabec
LeSeur	Lincoln	Mille Lacs
Mower	Pipestone	Rice
Scott	Wadena	Watonwan

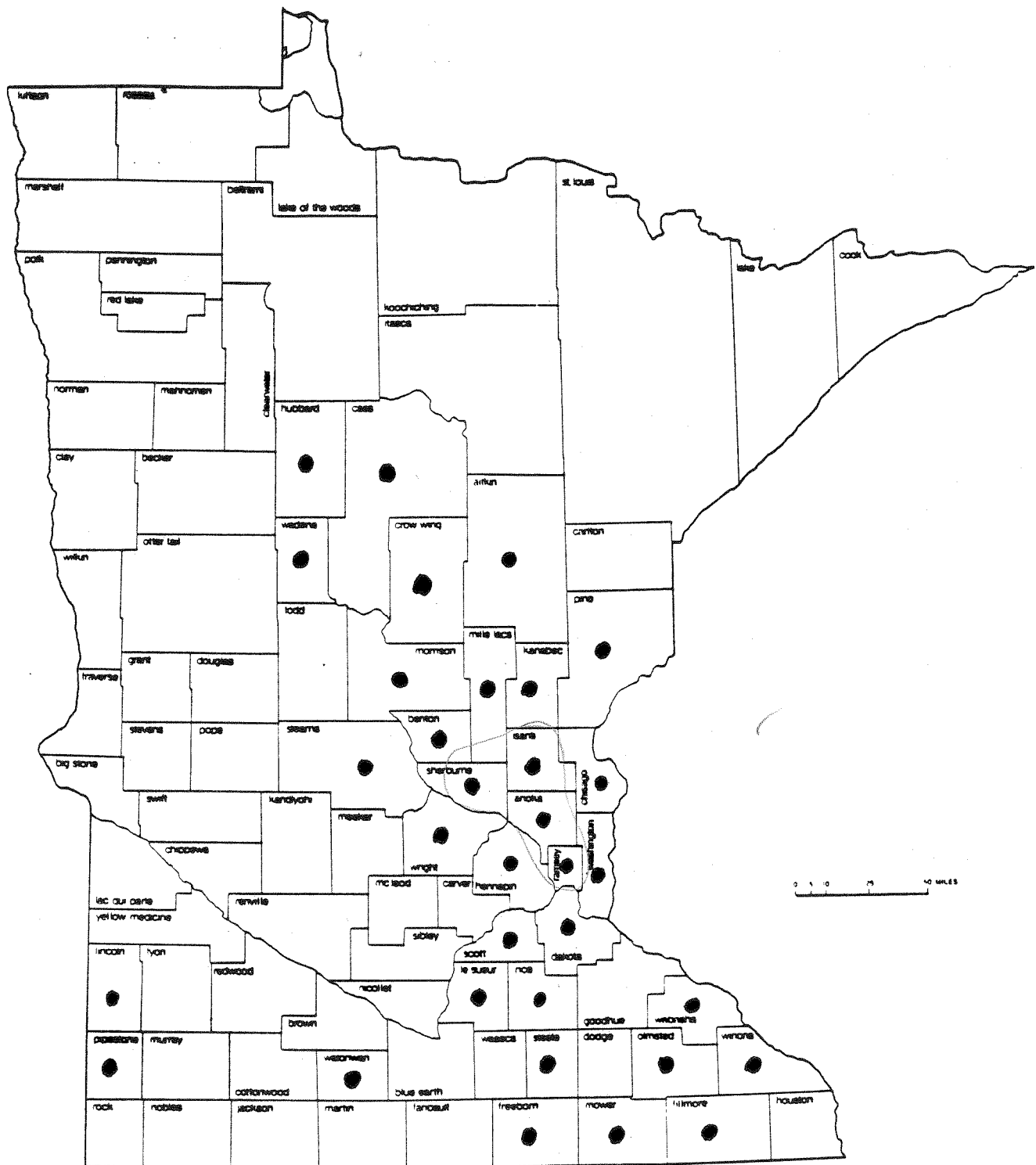


Figure 1. Blanding's Turtle Distribution, as of October 1988

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING BLANDING'S TURTLE SURVEY FORMS

General

1. Use 1 form for 1 sighting. Do Not place multiple sightings on 1 form.
2. The original survey form should have all related materials (i.e. photos, letters, maps) attached.
3. The original survey form will be sent to the central office with all attachments.
4. Incomplete records will not be mapped or used in any further analysis. Make sure the form is complete and accurate.

Form Fields

1. County: Write in the name of the county. If the location is near a county line make sure the correct county is entered or use both county names.
2. Legal Description: Fill in the Township, Range and Section if known. If a good map is attached, or a good written description provided, then the legal description is not needed. Be careful when writing legals from sites along the Mississippi River. Only use the 1/4, 1/4 section when positive. Do not interpret from a large scale map. Leave the 1/4, 1/4, to the Heritage mapper when there is any question.
3. Observer: Fill in observer's name. Do not use second hand information.
4. Date of Sighting: Be as exact as possible. Be cautious of reports that are not from the current calendar year.
5. Address: Fill in the address of the observer.
6. Date Reported: Fill in the date the observer contacted the DNR. If the date of the sighting is more than a month prior to the report be cautious of its accuracy.
7. Daytime Phone: Record the number of the observer.
8. Poster Sent.
9. Observer Status: The turtle expert category will be eliminated. Use the wildlife professional category when the observer's job is wildlife related. This is not a DNR category. Areas such as, forestry, minerals, etc. do not qualify as wildlife.

10. Number seen: The total number seen should be recorded. If turtles were seen on separate dates for the same sites then note how many were seen per day. The sex should only be entered if the observer knows the difference. If there is any doubt leave blank. The size should be entered only if the turtle was actually measured. All adult Blanding's turtles will be approximately 10 inches.

11. Have Blanding's Been Seen in this Area Before?: This is for the observer only. Second hand info should not be used. If yes, include dates.

12. Turtle Activity Observed: The movements of the turtle should be noted. If actual nesting or digging of a nest cavity is occurring, then mark nesting category.

13. Observer's description of area: The habitat surrounding the turtle location should be noted.

14. Additional Comments by Observer: This should be used for comments that do not fit into the other categories. The description of the turtle does not go in this category.

15. Map sent to Verify Location: A map should be sent to all observers. A county highway map or partial topo sheet should be used. A map should be attached to all reports. If the map is marked by the report taker then the map should be noted as "location marked from verbal description."

Documentation

16. Verified with a Specimen: This is only used when a turtle is collected and deposited in a museum. The type of specimen should be noted. The museum's address should be present. The preferred museum is the J.F. Bell Museum of Natural History.

17. Verified with a Photo: This is used when an identifiable photo is included in the report. The photo needs to be sent to the central office and then to the Bell Museum. This is not used when someone looks at a photo.

18. **Sighting Only:** Most records will be in this category. A complete written description needs to be recorded. The observer should be asked several questions to help determine the identity. Examples are: Did you see the stripes on the neck?, Was there any red on the shell?, Did it have a scaly tail?. The responses should be recorded.

19. **Turtle Observed by Another Person with Turtle Experience:** This should be used only if the turtle was brought to a person with good experience (i.e. DNR fisheries or wildlife biologist, selected university or museum personnel). Do not use references such as their father, brother, etc.

20. **Report Taken By:** This has to be signed or initialed by the person taking the report.

21 - 26. **Field Visit:** These categories should be treated the same as those on the front page. This portion should only be filled in by an experienced turtle person.

BLANDING'S TURTLE REPORT

① County _____ T^② _____ R _____ Sec _____ (¼ if possible)

③ Observer _____ ④ Date of sighting _____

⑤ Address _____ ⑥ Date reported _____

_____ ⑦ Daytime telephone _____

⑧ Poster sent: _____ Yes _____ No

⑨ Observer status: _____ General Public _____ Wildlife Professional
(give affiliation)

⑩ Number seen: _____ Sex _____ Size _____ (Distinguish if shell or body length)

⑪ Have Blanding's been seen in this area before?

⑫ Turtle activity observed: Nesting? Yes or No

⑬ Observer's description of area:

⑭ Additional comments by observer:

⑮ Map sent to verify location _____
(with stamped, self-addressed envelope)

Documentation of record:

⑯ 1. Verified with a specimen
Deposition of specimen:

⑰ 2. Verified with a photo

⑱ 3. Sighting only; reporter's description was as follows:

⑲ 4. Turtle also observed by another person with turtle experience -

⑳ Report taken by:

FIELD VISIT

(21) Field verification date _____ (22) Name _____

(23) Number seen _____ Sex _____ Size _____
(Distinguish if shell or body length)

(24) Map below and describe habitat in area where turtle was reported. Indicate closest wetlands, sandy upland habitat, drainage ditches and travel ways, highways, houses, extent of development:

(25) Additional turtles seen _____

(26) MAP: _____ Topo map # _____