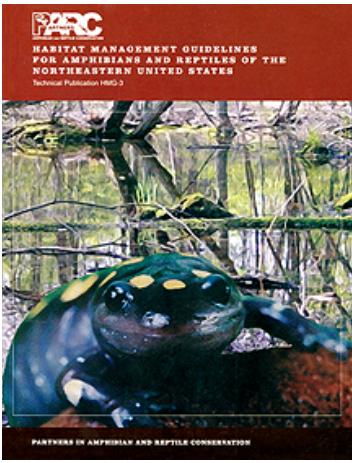


Habitat Management Resources for Eastern Box Turtle Habitat

Compiled by Northeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
(NEPARC)

Northeast Habitat Management Guidelines by the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC)



Habitat Management Guidelines (HMG)

Habitat alteration, fragmentation and loss are collectively considered to be the primary challenge in the conservation of amphibians and reptiles (i.e., herpetofauna). With herpetofaunal populations declining, and human populations expanding and using more land, PARC has developed a series of regionally specific best management practices, or Habitat Management Guidelines (HMGs) to provide proactive guidance for improving the compatibility of land management practices with these animals.

These guidelines are not regulations, nor are they in any way an attempt to limit landowners' rights. They should simply be regarded as recommendations for landowners and managers to consider the needs of amphibians and reptiles in the course of their management activities. The HMGs are directed towards resource managers and private landowners who have a desire to help protect amphibians and reptiles. If many landowners and land managers each implement some of these guidelines, then the cumulative effect can only be a positive one.

These guidelines:

- use the best science available
- are easily understood by and practical for land managers and private landowners
- present measures to help maximize compatibility with existing management objectives, or to optimize management actions specifically for herpetofauna
- provide guidance on the management and restoration of habitats such that amphibians, reptiles, and many other wildlife species may benefit

We have not created a guidebook that describes the needs of every species of amphibian and reptile. Instead, we provide regionally-specific guidelines for managing habitats with the goals of keeping common species common, stemming the decline of imperiled species, and reduce the likelihood of species becoming listed as threatened or endangered.

The Northeast regional guide is now available for sale at Northeast PARC annual meetings.

Mowing Advisory Guidelines in Upland Turtle Habitat: Pastures, Successional Fields, and Hayfields by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

Grasslands, shrublands, pastures and hayfields are important habitats for turtles, particularly the wood turtle and eastern box turtle. Therefore, the maintenance of these early successional habitat types is essential, often requiring periodic mowing. However, mowing during the spring and summer months can cause adult turtle mortality; in both western Massachusetts and Quebec mortality due to mowing was higher than mortality rates from automobiles.

Research has found that various factors can reduce turtle mortality due to mowing. Based on the results of these studies we developed a set of mowing guidelines to provide a suite of options, each of which is predicted to reduce turtle mortality. Things to consider include: mowing rotation, percent of area mowed, timing, mower style, blade height, directionality, and mower speed. In all situations, the most conservative option is to avoid using heavy machinery in early successional habitats from May 1 -September 15 (in Massachusetts). For more southern states we recommend mowing during the late fall and winter (cold) months while the turtles are inactive.



Photo by MassWildlife

The Mowing Advisory Guidelines can be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dfg/nhesp/species-and-conservation/mowing-guidelines.pdf>

Advisory Guidelines for Creating Turtle Nesting Habitat by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program



Photo by Liz Willey

Open canopy areas with well-drained soils are ideal turtle nesting habitat. One of the major threats to our native turtles is habitat fragmentation and associated adult mortality due to road traffic. Female turtles often travel substantial distances from feeding wetlands to the nearest appropriate nesting habitat in order to lay their eggs. One way to reduce nesting related mortalities is to assure access to nesting habitat near feeding and overwintering wetlands, with roadless corridors in between. Therefore we developed guidelines for creating nesting habitat for turtles on conservation land, where nesting habitat is lacking. Native plant community and all native species, particularly state-listed species, should be considered when developing management plans.

The Nest Site Creating Guidelines can be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dfg/nhesp/species-and-conservation/creating-turtle-nesting-sites.pdf>