

Turtle Monitoring at Little Long Pond

We are currently seeking volunteers to help us monitor turtle activity at Little Long Pond.

Every year around the end of May/beginning of June female snapping turtles leave the pond to lay eggs along Route 3 at Bracy Cove. This is potentially deadly for them, so we are working with the Maine State Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to keep them safe. Here is what we have done:

- Added additional wire mesh under the cedar fence along Route 3 to dissuade turtles from entering the road.
- Created eight nest pits around the pond that we hope the turtles will find suitable for egg laying. These are simply plant-free pits of sandy/gravelly soil (10' long, 3' wide) that are easy for the turtles to dig through. Pit locations: along Route 3 at Bracy Cove (4 pits); just north of the southern-most water access area (1 pit); and the West Meadow (3 pits). The turtles may find/use them all, or none. We will have to wait and see.
- Also in coordination with the State of Maine, COA professor Steve Ressle and his class are conducting a population study on the turtles this spring. The study involves netting and marking the turtles. Email Tate at tbushell@gardenpreserve.org for more information.

How you can help:

We need help monitoring, measuring, and marking turtles. Every turtle that we can get our hands on this year (painted turtles and snapping turtles) will be marked and measured (shell dimensions). This will allow us to better understand how many turtles we have in the pond, how many are nesting females, and more about their nesting preferences. Remember, the idea is to keep them out of Route 3, so if we mark the turtles, we will be able to track individual turtle's nesting preferences. The activity peaks for about 5-10 days and we do not know exactly when they are going to start moving this year.

Turtles are early risers, so we need help monitoring the Bracy Cove area in the early morning (first light – 7 a.m.) and other times of the day. You do not necessarily need to handle the turtles (although that will be a help). You can still volunteer if you are uncomfortable with handling a snapping turtle. Snappers can be safely handled, but it is not hard to be injured by a snapper if you are careless or otherwise disrespectful of their power. This is probably not a great opportunity for children unless they are accompanied by a very willing and able parent. Minimum volunteer requirement is one hour per session. More than an hour will be more helpful.

Interested volunteers should email Tate Bushell directly at tbushell@gardenpreserve.org.

All volunteers will need to make themselves available for 1 or 2 training sessions before we go live. Once we hear back from interested volunteers Tate will be in touch regarding a training session.
Thank you all for your ongoing help.