



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Wildlife Diversity News

Conservation and Recreation

August 2, 2023



Why Did the Turtle Cross the Road?

Iowa has 5 species of salamanders, 17 frogs & toads, 5 lizards, 28 snakes, and 13 species of turtles. Almost all of these could be hit by cars as they move between wetlands. Thinking specifically about turtles, some spend most of their time in water like Smooth or Spiny Softshell turtles and some are almost fully terrestrial like the Ornate Box Turtle. All turtles, however, lay their eggs on land.

Many female turtles will cross roadways moving from their homes in nearby wetlands into the surrounding fields to dig a hole and lay their eggs. This makes them especially vulnerable to being hit by cars on the roadways. Each year, we remind people that if they are stopping (only in a safe location) to help a turtle cross the road (in the direction it was heading) about the best way to handle a turtle.



Is there a way to help prevent these road mortalities?

We are partnering with the Iowa Department of Transportation to learn more about 'hotspot' areas where turtles (and other reptiles and amphibians) get killed each year. If we can pinpoint areas with high collisions, we may be able to design underpasses, culverts, or other wildlife crossing areas that could reduce the turtle mortality AND damage to car/tire alignment.

How Can you Help?



Help us identify hot spots!

If you have a reptile or amphibian roadkill hotspot near you, please let us know by filling out the [google form linked here](#) or by using the button below! We are not just interested in turtles - salamanders, snakes and frogs or toads are also of interest.

The form will ask you:

1. the exact location (like with a pin in google maps or a latitude/longitude position or a UTM location)
2. approximately how many individuals of what species
3. what time of year most collisions occur
4. how often there are dead or injured amphibians or reptiles at that location

[Fill Out Form >](#)

Thank you for your help!

We will compile all the records and pass them along to our partners at DOT! If the form will not work for you, you can send your responses to Karen.Kinkead@dnr.iowa.gov but we MUST be able to pinpoint exactly where you are referring to on the road!