

Nature Adventures Module: What is happening to the false map turtles?

(Highlighted words are found in the Glossary List)

Todd: One of the things I am most proud of in my life is the time we got a good look at a false map turtle in the wild.

Terri: And from what I understand and remember, that was quite a feat!

Todd: False map turtles are extremely shy, and sadly, it's a rarity to find them in the wild these days.

Terri: Sadly, that is true. False map turtles have been taken from the wild and used in the pet trade because they are such beautiful animals. On top of that, they are also sensitive to **environmental** factors, such as weather extremes and dry spells, as well as manmade factors, such as agricultural runoff, dams, and habitat destruction.

Todd: At one time, false map turtles were common in South Dakota. Loss of habitat has played a major role in the decline in the numbers of false map turtles since these turtles already face a limited range. False map turtles are now rare residents in certain areas of the Missouri River where abundant numbers of false map turtles formerly dwelled.

Terri: False map turtles depend on sandy shorelines and large, natural river systems and they live in large streams of the Missouri and Mississippi river systems. The false map turtle is a strong swimmer and prefers rivers and large creeks with moderate currents, containing aquatic vegetation, as well as snags or floating logs. They are also comfortable in deep and swift water.

Todd: False map turtles are also called sawbacks because of the saw tooth edge on their shell. And the term map turtle was given to them because their shell resembles lines on a map! I find it fascinating how much bigger the females get in comparison to the males! Female map turtles shells can grow to around 11 inches, but the males typically only grow to around 6 inches!

Terri: These turtles have a shorter active season when compared to other types of turtles. They are active from late April to September. They are **diurnal** and spend a considerable amount of time basking. They forage for short periods during the day. They are very **aquatic** and do not roam far from water. They bask on anything above the water as long as it is away from shore in deep water. False map turtles eat a large amount of aquatic insects, plants, fish, crayfish, and other aquatic life.

Todd: Because the Missouri River continues to change ecologically, false map turtles may be affected well into the future. For this species to remain a Missouri River resident or, more specifically, a South Dakota resident, we need to maintain and enhance protection along the Missouri River. Hopefully, this will ensure the existence of false map turtles as well as other rare or protected species of the Missouri River for future generations to enjoy.

Source:

http://www.sdgifp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/Digest%20Articles/false_map.htm