

SECTION THREE: How You Can Help

1. Leave wild turtles in the wild. Don't collect turtles for pets. Observe and enjoy them in their natural habitat.
2. Ban balloon releases. Sea turtles and other marine animals sometimes eat plastic bags and balloons. Instead of having balloon releases to celebrate special events, organize a bubble release.
3. Don't pollute. Pick up garbage and plastic from beaches and decrease your use of plastic by using reusable bags and paper plates instead of Styrofoam. Recycle as much as you can.
4. **Help a turtle cross a road.** If you need to move a turtle from the road do so only when it is safe and with the help of adults. Carry the turtle to the side of the road in which it is headed. (Get help if there is traffic.) Don't carry a turtle by its tail. For a snapping turtle or other large turtle, gently push it across with a stick.
5. Protect your town's open spaces. You can learn where the natural habitats are in your community. Explore them, learn about them, and tell others about them. Work with the town conservation commission or department of parks and recreation to promote the use and understanding of parks, ponds and wetlands for wildlife. Help to protect wetlands. Identify and protect nesting and overwintering areas. Perhaps you could be the first person to write a field guide to your town's natural areas. Report all your turtle sightings to Adopt-A-Pond at <http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond> or Kawartha Turtle Watch at <http://www.trentu.ca/biology/turtlewatch>.
6. Learn and teach. The more you know about turtles, their homes, nesting areas and their needs, the more you can teach those around you to value them. Host a turtle lunch or turtle talk in your neighbourhood to help others understand these wonderful creatures!

Turtle Etiquette

You can help to protect turtles by protecting turtle habitat – even if you don't live near or visit wetlands or beaches. Commonly used items such as plastic bags, helium balloons and chemical fertilizers eventually end up in our streams, rivers and oceans. Sea turtles often die from ingesting plastic, balloons and other marine garbage. Chemicals from fertilizers, oil and paint run off into our waterways and can be a major hazard to turtles as well. Do not use non-renewable resources such as sand and gravel from lakes and waterways, as these are important habitats and may be nesting sites.

Steps to a Turtle-Friendly Lifestyle

- Keep plastic bag use to a minimum
- Recycle whenever possible
- Use biodegradable garden products
- Return household hazardous waste to designated municipal depots
- Discourage the use of helium balloons for celebrations
- Remove litter from turtle habitat

- If you encounter a nesting turtle, observe it quietly from a distance
- Never subject a sea turtle to bright lights or flash photography
- Help to identify and protect turtle nesting and over-wintering sites
- Never take turtle from the wild as pets
- Cut plastic six-pack rings before properly disposing of them



ACTIVITY #20: THE TURTLE REPORT

Fill in the following checklist to see how “turtle friendly” your school is.

- Students bring “litterless” lunches
- School recycles wherever possible
- School composts all organic materials
- All litter is picked up and placed in the trash bins
- School has “adopted” a pond in your area. This can include restoring, protecting or creating a new wetland for turtles and other creatures to live
- Balloons and plastic bags are not used unless absolutely necessary. All six-pack rings are cut before being properly disposed of
- All harmful chemicals are disposed of at designated municipal depots or other appropriate facilities
- School does not use pesticides and fertilizers; uses biodegradable products
- All harmful chemicals are disposed of at garages or other appropriate facilities
- Add your own eco-friendly checklist!
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ACTIVITY #21: BE A CONSERVATIONIST!

TOPIC

What can we do to help turtles at risk?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kids 4 Turtles was started by students and teachers just like you! Saving turtles starts with public awareness. The students at Rollin' Acres were concerned about the number of turtles being run over by cars while crossing the road. They planned and implemented a conservation program that would alert motorists to the presence of nesting female turtles that crossed the road. For more information on Kids 4 Turtles, see Section One: Turtles at Risk.

MATERIALS

Student outline

Paper

Writing utensils

Materials and resources for research

METHOD

1. Read Section One: Turtles at Risk aloud to students. Distribute a student outline to each group.
2. Divide students into groups of 4 to 5 and hand out a student work sheet to each group.
3. As a group, have students brainstorm a conservation issue they wish to pursue. Conservation issues can include turtles killed by passing motorists in a local area, a local wetland that needs restoration, the loss of a gravel beach used by nesting turtles and so on. Students may also choose to focus on conserving a specific turtle species that is threatened or of special concern (e.g. leatherback turtle, eastern spiny softshell turtle, musk turtle, spotted turtle, northern map turtle, or wood turtle).
4. Once they have decided on a plan, students should research and develop a conservation plan (e.g. posting road signs, protecting nesting areas), brainstorm funding solutions (e.g. fund raising), find out what approvals must be granted (e.g. townships and Ministry of Transportation), determine how to put their conservation plan in place, and decide on any publicity and public education efforts needed to make their plan successful.



ACTIVITY #21: BE A CONSERVATIONIST!

Student Outline

Many of the organizations and programs that you have just heard about were created by people just like you! With a little creativity and some research you can show people that you care about turtles too!

1. Working with your group, brainstorm ideas for a turtle cause. Perhaps a local wetland in your area is about to be destroyed for development. You may know of important nesting areas. You may be really concerned about protecting the threatened eastern spiny softshell turtle. Your cause may lay in protecting female turtles as they cross busy road ways or perhaps you can support the Nova Scotia Leatherback Turtle Working Group (www.seaturtle.org).
2. What is your plan? (What information/action is needed to help turtles?)
3. What fund raising or education/outreach opportunities are there? (How much money do you need to raise and how are you going to get it?).
4. What approvals do you need to get to put your program in action? (Do you need approval from your township? Ministry of Transportation?)
5. How are you going to put in your plan in place? (Do you need something installed? If so, what companies are available to do this?)
6. What publicity do you need to have in order to make your program successful? (Do you need to contact newspapers, radio stations or local television stations?)
7. How are you going to educate the public about your program?



ACTIVITY #22: WANTED, STUDENTS TO HELP SAVE ONTARIO'S TURTLES!

Many of Ontario's turtles are in trouble due to habitat destruction and other human-caused problems. You can help turtles by showing your turtle know-how and creating a poster to help others learn about Ontario's turtles. Design your own turtle poster about one of the turtles featured in Unit One: Turtles of Ontario. Some students may wish to feature Canada's only sea turtle, the endangered leatherback.

Choose an audience for your poster and develop it accordingly. Design a slogan and/or logo. Be sure to include a picture of your turtle and some conservation ideas about how we can help save the turtle.

Send the final products to the Toronto Zoo. We would love to see your work! We may even publish your conservation poster in *Amphibian Voice*, Adopt-A-Pond's newsletter about wetlands, amphibians and turtles in Ontario. If you live in another part of Canada, we would love to see your drawings too!