



REPTILE FIELD STUDY FACT SHEET



Eastern Painted Turtle.

This fact sheet provides information about VIA HFR’s reptile study program. It tells you how to get answers to your questions and give us your comments. Your insights will help shape the program.

What is a reptile study?

A reptile study focuses on documenting and understanding the turtle, snake and lizard (reptile) populations in a specific area. The 2024 study will focus on turtles and snakes.

Key terms

Reptile

Reptiles are mostly four-legged animals (except snakes) with backbones that warm their bodies using the surrounding environment and usually lay eggs. Reptiles include turtles, snakes and lizards.

Cold-Blooded

Reptiles’ body temperature varies with that of the environment – this is called being poikilothermic. Being cold-blooded means reptiles rely on external heat sources to regulate their body temperature.

Why study reptiles?

Many turtles are considered at-risk by federal and/ or provincial legislations, including the Blanding’s Turtle, Eastern Musk Turtle, Eastern Painted Turtle, Midland Painted Turtle, Northern Map Turtle, Snapping Turtle and the Spiny Softshell.

HFR planners may also encounter the Dekay’s Brownsnake which is protected under the *Québec Act Respecting Threatened or Vulnerable Species, 1989*. Field studies will help HFR planners better understand and protect reptiles when building and operating the new railway, while determining a baseline for future studies.



Dekay's Brownsnake.



What do reptile studies involve?

Reptile studies involve two approaches; one for turtles and one for snakes.



The turtle basking study involves searching surrounding wetlands for aquatic turtles.



The snake study involves the installation of artificial cover objects (manmade “covers” like asphalt on plywood, that snakes may rest under) throughout the study area, and then returning at a later date to search beneath or near the cover objects for snakes.

These studies will be complemented by other sources of information, including Indigenous knowledge (when provided).

When will reptile studies occur?

Reptile studies are timed for the spring, after the snow melts and temperatures start to warm. The 2024 reptile studies will take place between May and June.

Study Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Reptiles												



Snapping Turtle.



Where are reptile studies taking place?

The 2024 reptile studies will take place along sections of existing railway routes in Ontario, from Twin Elm up to Ottawa and down to Vars, and in Québec near Laval to the 740 highway in Québec City.



Where can I learn more about HFR?

If you're interested in getting more information, or if you have a question or comment, please visit www.hfr-tgf.ca. You may also contact the HFR Team via email at: questions@hfr-tgf.ca

For more information on Canada's impact-assessment process, visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency.html>