

4.3

Reading - What Do Western Pond Turtles Eat?

Getting Ready

In class, you talked about why the number of Western Pond Turtles is decreasing. One of the reasons might be that something is happening to their food. What kinds of food you think pond turtles eat?

Put a check mark beside any of these that you think affect what a pond turtle eats

_____ The size of the turtle

_____ Where in the waterway they live

_____ The temperature of the water

As you read, highlight any science words you are not familiar with:
look for answers to these questions.

Use a different color to highlight the answers in the text:

What plants do the turtles eat?

What animals do the turtles eat?

These turtles are omnivorous and opportunistic feeders, eating both plants and animals. Aquatic invertebrates make up the majority of their diet, but some plant material is also consumed. They like to feed on plant material such as cattail roots, inflorescences, alder catkins, willow, yellow pond lily fronds, tule, lily pods and filamentous algae. They also feed on animals such as carrion, frogs, tadpoles, fishes as well as crayfish, snakes, insects and several aquatic invertebrates. Vertebrates are a small part of their diet. It is not clear if the turtles actually capture vertebrate prey or mostly exploit dead or weakened animals. They are known to consume carrion, have been observed scavenging on a variety of vertebrates and will quickly consume fresh fish carcasses they encounter and that are placed in traps. It is easier for turtles to swallow their food under water.

The diet of adults and occasionally juveniles consisted of small quantities of plant matter, including algae and roots of aquatic plants. Aquatic insects comprised the majority of the prey of juveniles in a stream habitat.