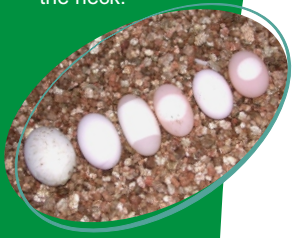


fact sheet

FITZROY RIVER TURTLE (*Rheodytes leukops*)



Close up of head and neck. Note the tubercles on the neck.



The Fitzroy River turtle egg is the smallest of these six Australian freshwater turtle eggs



Turtle hatching - note the black "dog-like" nose and caruncle (egg tooth)



Hatching posture showing cloacal respiration through gaping cloaca.



CENTRAL QUEENSLAND LOCAL UNDER THREAT

Currently in Queensland there are 59 species of animals classified as 'endangered' and 77 classified as 'vulnerable' under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Only discovered in 1980, the Fitzroy River Turtle (*Rheodytes leukops*) is currently listed as 'vulnerable' both in Queensland and nationally.

This species is known only to inhabit the rivers and creeks of the Fitzroy Basin, including the Fitzroy, Dawson, Mackenzie and Connors rivers. This means that it lives nowhere else in the world.

There is currently little information available on this species and any change to its population could spell disaster for this unique Central Queensland local.

This species is often referred to as a 'bum-breather' due to its unique way of breathing through its bottom. This allows the turtle to stay submerged for days. It receives 70 percent of its oxygen requirements from this mode of respiration. This species prefers to live in riffle zones with rock, gravel, or sandy bottoms.

It is a medium-sized, short-necked tortoise with an oval shaped shell. It is medium to dark brown in colour with a distinctive white ring on its eyes (silver-blue in juveniles). Juveniles up to 95mm have a serrated edge on their shells, similar to some snapping turtle juveniles. Adults often have a series of distinct rough parallel ridges on their shell and large conical lumps on their necks.

This species is an omnivore, eating both plant and animal matter, such as ribbon weed, freshwater sponges and aquatic insects.

Sightings of this species are rare, therefore little is known about this species. Current research is showing a possible decline in population due to a number of threatening processes.

Nest predation (by foxes, pigs, dogs, and feral cats) is possibly the number one threat to the survival of this species, along with habitat loss and destruction, nest trampling and a decline in water quality. This species is unique only to this region and is currently facing a major threat to its survival.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

For further information on the Fitzroy River Turtle, its habitat, and the actions we can all take as a community to help protect this species, or to find out how you can become involved in this project, contact the organisations listed below.

To report any sightings, contact the Environment Protection Agency.



Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Helping Australia
An Australian Government Initiative



Photos courtesy of - Dr. Col Limpus
- Craig Latta - AFTCRA Inc.

To report any sightings, contact the Environment Protection Agency
FITZROY BASIN ASSOCIATION ON (07) 4999 2800 OR
GREENING AUSTRALIA QUEENSLAND ON (07) 4923 7543