Incidental Eastern Box Turtle Encounter Form

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Observer(s):** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Site: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Lat: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Long: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Capture Type:   * Unmarked * Marked | Status:   * Alive * Dead/Shell * Unknown | **Photos:**   * Yes * No |
| Visible Injuries:   * Yes (Photos if possible) * No | Behavior:   * Walking * Foraging/Feeding * Inactive (in form) * Courting/Mating * Fighting/Dispute * Nesting * Other | Habitat:   * Forest * Field/meadow * Floodplain/Seep * Scrub/Shrub * Other |
| Management Type:   * Hayfield * Cattle Pasture * Cropland * Fallow/Post ag field * Native Meadow * Other | Weather:   * Clear * Partly Cloudy * Cloudy * Rain * Other | Notes: |
|  |  |  |

***Habitat***: General description of the habitat within a 50m radius where the turtle was initially encountered. Below are the categories to choose from

* Forest- Primarily comprised of densely grown trees (regardless of understory type)
* Field/meadow- Comprised of mostly grasses with a little to no large woody plants
* Floodplain/Seep- Area that has standing water from a spring or holds water seasonally
* Scrub/Shrub- Mostly comprised of short trees/bushes that are >10m tall
* Other- Describe as needed

***Behavior***: Record the initial behavior from when the turtle is first encountered/observed. Turtles often change behaviors once they’ve been noticed, so recording their behavior after the encounter has already started may be inaccurate. If a turtle is partially or fully under leaf litter or grasses while completely enclosed, that is known as being in “form” and should be recorded as such.

* Walking- Actively moving when observed, this may include when a turtle flees from observer
* Foraging/Feeding- If a turtle is observed actively feeding, or there is evidence of recent feeding (e.g. food on mouth, food item with V-shaped bites at turtle location)
* Inactive (in form)- Turtle is still, inside of shell, buried under plant (in form) material upon observation
* Courting/Mating- If a male turtle is seen biting, headbutting, circling, or mounting a female turtle
* Fighting/Dispute- If two male turtles are observed biting, headbutting, or mounting each other. This appears very similar to the courting ritual, but the key differences are that both are male, and the dominate/winning make will not try to copulate with the other male after mounting.
* Nesting- If a female turtle is digging (in sand, gravel, mulch, etc.) with their rear claws and is resting with their backside over the cavity they may be nesting or testing an area to nest, DO NOT DISTURB (Nesting typically occurs from May-July in Virginia)
* Other- Any other kind of activity that cannot be categorized using categories above

***Weather***: Weather conditions are generalized descriptions from the initial time of encounter:

* Clear- Very few or no clouds present
* Partly Cloudy- (ca. 10% to 60% cloudy)
* Cloudy- (more than ca. 60% cloudy)
* Rain- Rain in any capacity during or within the last hour before the turtle encounter
* Other-

***Photos***: If the animal is in a position where it can be photographed (e.g. in stilt grass), then a clear photo from overhead that encompasses the entire carapace is preferred.

***Status***: Condition during the initial encounter; box turtles will often enclose themselves in their shells when they feel threatened. So, if the shell looks intact but the turtle is enclosed, they’re likely afraid, not dead.

* Alive
* Dead
* Unknown

Email turtle photos & photocopies of datasheets to [earlemp@si.edu](mailto:earlemp@si.edu) once complete!