



## CWF's Stand on the Ontario Snapping Turtle Hunt

Continuing to allow the hunt of a listed species at risk sends the wrong message to Ontarians and Canadians that snapping turtle populations can sustain further harm and mortality. The appropriate message and the precautionary approach is that we need to do all we can to end all causes of mortality for snapping turtles. The threats to snapping turtles are quite well known and nearly all attributed to human induced mortality, primarily due to road kill and habitat loss. Harvest is an additional source of mortality on an already declining population.

The Proposed Management Plan for Ontario specifically states that “considering the reproductive strategy of the Snapping Turtle (i.e., delayed sexual maturity, high embryo mortality, extended adult longevity; see section 3.4 – Limiting Factors), **harvesting (legal or illegal) of adults and older juveniles is especially harmful for wild populations.** Van Dijk (2012) reported that **in some areas at the northern limit of the Snapping Turtle’s range, harvesting of these turtles has resulted in significant declines in local populations.**”

The Proposed Management Plan also includes the specific reason for the species being designated at risk indicating “when these threats cause even apparently minor increases in the mortality of adults, populations are likely to decline as long as these mortality increases persist” and goes on to point out that the threats to individuals are additive. Even minor amounts of mortality from harvesting adults would contribute to population decline. The negative implications of the loss of a single reproductive female are sizable given the low odds for a juvenile to survive long enough to become sexually mature. Likewise, once a female is reproducing she can lay a clutch of eggs every year for decades so removing such an individual from the population results in many lost generations. Given the impact of removing even a single adult turtle and the uncertainty in harvest numbers there simply should be no allowable harvest of snapping turtles.

Furthermore, while unlikely, the proposed hunting regulation does mean that it would be within the law for one person or a group of individuals to cause the extirpation of a local population by harvesting a local area repeatedly. Under this regulation, harvesters could remove a significant portion of adult turtles in a wetland provided they never harvest more than one per day and are never in possession of more than two.

The Canadian Wildlife Federation understands that in some cases and for certain species at risk continuing a highly regulated harvest, allowing some incidental mortality, or continuing a catch and release activity can be beneficial to recovering the species; however, snapping turtle harvest is not one of these cases.

We urge the government of Ontario to reconsider the snapping turtle harvest and CWF encourages every citizen to do the same by [voicing your concerns](#) on this proposed regulation.