

2020 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one)

2021 1st

2021 2nd

2021 3rd

2021 4th

Grant Program, Number and Title: GSA 00074 - Conservation Plan for the Blanding's Turtle and associated Species of Conservation Need in the Northeastern United States

Organization: Oriante Society

Project Leader: Kiley Briggs

Abstract: Please provide a short (1-2 paragraphs) abstract that addresses EACH of the following: the objectives of your project, accomplishments to date, future plans and timelines with an estimate for when the project will be completed.

Up to this point, the major focus of our efforts have centered around background research, conservation planning, outreach to potential partners in Blanding's Turtle conservation, and the development of Best Management Practice (BMP) documents. During that time, we identified a variety of field-based needs such as site visits with partners, assessing nesting habitat quality and management needs, landowner outreach, volunteer work days, and game camera monitoring. This quarter marked the first opportunity since the start of the pandemic to visit Blanding's Turtle habitat to help assess and prioritize conservation and monitoring needs and to implement small, field-based projects. Trips this quarter focused on the general themes of habitat assessments, nest site monitoring, conservation planning, and partner outreach as outlined on page two.

Concurrent to on-the-ground projects and meetings, we continued work on a BMP brochure and booklet, meeting with state biologists to discuss and prioritize conservation and monitoring projects, and began work drafting conservation plans for high priority that lack existing plans. We will continue working on all of these fronts through the year and into early 2022 with a projected end date of March 31.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter?

Yes. Last quarter also quarter provided a much-anticipated opportunity to act on a variety of tasks that had been deferred due to travel restrictions in place through the pandemic. While BMP document text is not yet completed as initially planned, completion of those documents is not time-sensitive and we prioritized field-based actions to take full advantage of lifted travel restrictions.

Progress Achieved: (For each Goal/Objective, list Planned and Actual Accomplishments)

Goal: Visit and assess conservation opportunities at selected sites that had not been visited due to the pandemic. Accomplishments:

- a. A site visit with a land trust to assess the need for nesting habitat creation in the St. Lawrence Valley, leading to land trust support for a large nesting project on their land.
- b. Two trips to assess and identify areas of actionable conservation need at a site in the Hudson River Valley

Goal: Review condition of nesting habitat at sites in MA and NH to prioritize near-term management priorities. Accomplishments:

- a. Trips to two sites in MA to assess nesting habitat management needs, resulting in vegetation

control weeks later.

- b. Deployment of game cameras to monitor nesting activity at three recently managed sites.

Goal: Recruit volunteers and coordinate efforts to repair fencing that prevents Blanding's Turtles from nesting along a major MA state highway. Accomplishment:

- a. 1 mile of fencing restored to a turtle-proof state
- b. Deployment of game cameras to assess need for additional fencing work.

Goal: Meet with previously uncontacted government stakeholders to introduce Blanding's Turtle conservation and propose near-term management actions. Accomplished:

- a. Preliminary meetings with a NH school board that owns significant nesting habitat, resulting in support for restricting off-road vehicle use on site.
- b. A presentation to a town conservation commission to propose ways to address the issue of roadkill on a town highway.

Difficulties Encountered:

Scheduling time to meet with state and non-governmental partners remains difficult due to busy schedules as people catch up on work that was deferred during earlier stages in the pandemic.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Continued partner outreach including meetings with town conservation commissions
- BMP booklet and brochure completion (Q3 or Q4)
- Draft conservation plans for two sites and begin updating others.
- Plan for future conservation and monitoring projects to take place after this RCN grant closes
- Work with partners to improve nesting habitat through volunteer work days in MA
- Conduct one rapid trapping assessment on a private property in NH

Expected End Date:

March 2022

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter):

Total Approved Budgeted Funds:

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? YES

Signature:



Date: July 29, 2021