

The Ornate Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata ornata*) in Colorado



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The Western or Ornate Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata ornata*) is a widely distributed and familiar animal on the central plains of the United States, and is considered common throughout much of its range. The Ornate Box Turtle's approachability and charisma have made it a favorite of adults and children alike for many generations. Unfortunately, its gentle demeanor has made it a target for the pet trade, its slow movements have made it an easy roadkill, and human activities have destroyed and fragmented its habitat.

Despite its perceived abundance, few extensive studies have been done on populations of *T. o. ornata*, and none have been conducted in Colorado. Scientific research on other populations and local anecdotal evidence point to rapidly declining populations. The Colorado Reptile Humane Society is launching the Colorado Box Turtle Project, a study of populations of *T. o. ornata* to better understand population dynamics, land use, and impacts of human activities, which include harvesting for the pet trade. As Colorado's eastern plains continue to be heavily developed, this information will aid in determining population viability and conservation needs for this species before it becomes too late to prevent extirpation.

The Colorado Reptile Humane Society is currently seeking funding sources and equipment donations to support the Colorado Box Turtle Project. For more information, including a more detailed project description, please visit:

www.corhs.org/boxturtleproject.html
or contact
boxturtleproject@corhs.org.