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## **Turtles**

Living in rural areas we get a front row seat to see an abundance of wildlife. Over the last few months you have probably seen more turtles on your commute.

There are a few factors of why turtles are much more visible to drivers right now.

When the weather warms up, thunderstorms are more likely to be present in the region. As continuous rain falls in the spring, flooding can cause many turtles to move from one body of water to another, said Charlie Lee, extension specialist in wildlife control and instructor at Kansas State University.

Another factor of numerous turtle sighting is that late spring and early summer is prime turtle breeding season. Many are moving around as they look for nesting sites, which are a little further distant from water than where they may normally be found,” Lee said. Females are also looking for places to lay eggs as males are looking for females, said Marc Murrell with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism at Wichita’s Great Plains Nature Center.

Turtles are cold-blooded animals that require a heat source in order to maintain body temperature. “As temperatures warm up, these turtles become more active because they are cold blooded,” Murrell said. He also stresses that if you see a turtle on a road, don’t swerve to miss it or get out of your vehicle to move it out of the road. If there is no other way to avoid the turtle he said, the best advice, he can give is to hit it. However, if a driver can safely slow down to avoid hitting the turtle, then do so. “Just don’t swerve. More often than not someone will be injured or killed trying to swerve to save an animal.

Although Turtles pose minimal risks to people, K-State Research and Extension specialist Charlie Lee, advises not to handle the turtles. Turtles can carry salmonella which can transfer to humans. Murrell emphasizes that “turtles, just like any other type of wildlife, may bite or scratch if you pick them up” and advices to not do so.

If you find a turtle in your yard, there is no need to report the sighting to anyone.

“Just enjoy it,” Murrell said. “And if you have kids, let them look and teach them about the turtles and what they are doing. This is an opportunity to observe nature and wildlife up close.”

## **Source:**

2017, Marc Murrell, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism at Wichita’s Great Plains Nature Center.

Charlee Lee, K-State Research and Extension Specialist – Wildlife Control/Instructor

