

Q&A with Lalainya Goldsberry

Lalainya Goldsberry is the manager of living collections at the Nature Museum. In addition to overseeing the care of all of the animals that live in our Look-In Lab, she also works closely with our Blanding's turtle hatchlings as part of an ongoing Blanding's turtle restoration program. This time of year is an impactful and important time for Blanding's turtles. Let's find out why!

Q: What are the current and future plans for the Blanding's turtle conservation work?

A: We currently have 113 one-year-old turtles. On Thursday, August 20, 98 of them were released while 15 will stay another year. We will receive 120 2020 hatchling turtles soon and will continue to support the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County's Blanding's turtle "head-start" program by rearing the turtles for a year.

Q: Why is this important?

A: Blanding's turtles are threatened or endangered in most states where they occur. They are endangered in Illinois. The main reasons for this are issues such as habitat loss, road mortality, and predators. "Head-starting" allows for the eggs to hatch and the hatchling turtles to be safe when they are at their most vulnerable. In the wild, up to 90% of Blanding's turtle nests are destroyed by predators such as raccoons (the main culprit), skunks, opossums, and minks!

Q: What is your favorite part of this work?

A: The best part of this work is when the turtles are released—having spent a year feeding, cleaning, weighing, measuring, then finally microchipping and notching their shells for identification—then seeing these turtles placed in the wild and swim off. It's a lot of fun to watch the very young hatchlings in their first month eat. They are placed in tackle boxes, each turtle in its own section, and offered food with a pipette (blood worms are always a favorite!).



Animal caretaker Lily Barajas, manager of living collections Lalainya Goldsberry, and Forest Preserve District of DuPage County's Dan Thompson during a Blanding's turtle release.

