

## News Release

# Students Jenna Blace and Alisha Mosloff in U of M Crookston Herpetology Class Release Eastern Painted Turtles

By Itolfe on Friday, September 13, 2013 University of Minnesota Crookston natural resources majors Alisha Mosloff, a junior from Thief



River Falls, Minn., and Jenna Blace, a senior from Saginaw, Minn., assisted with the release of some eastern painted turtles as part of the new herpetology course taught fall semester by Vanessa Lane, Ph.D.

In June, Lane was contacted about a painted turtle nest near the Pankratz Prairie just east of Crookston. A young skunk kit had dug up the nest and eaten all but three of the eggs. Unfortunately, the remaining three eggs were beginning to dry out because they had been unearthed. Since Lane breeds reptiles (ball pythons and leopard geckos) as a hobby, she was contacted and put the turtle eggs in an incubator at her home. Thirty-days later (incubation period for painted turtles is around 60 days) the three tiny little turtles hatched.

When turtles hatch, their shells are still quite soft, especially their bellies where they finish absorbing their yolk. They also don't eat for 1-2 weeks after they hatch because they are still living on the remains of their yolk, which at that point is inside their body cavity. Baby turtles are very vulnerable when they first hatch and are eaten by almost everything. Lane kept them in a plastic sterilite container outside covered in hardware mesh to keep them safe but still expose them to all-important ultraviolet light, which allows them to metabolize vitamin D<sub>3</sub> and turn calcium into bone and shell. After a week they began eating small live insects and commercial turtle pellets.



Lane raised them for about a month until they were eating and growing well, and their shells had fully hardened. They were released this week with the help of Blace and Mosloff.

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*In the photo at the top right are Jenna Blace (left) and Alisha Mosloff (right) in photo hold the tiny Eastern Painted Turtles before release.*

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