

Turtle-y Awesome Stewards

“God saw all that he made, and it was very good.” —Genesis 1:31

ONE OF MY FAVORITE CREATURES

is the turtle. I love its hard-armored shell, scaly legs, determined walk, and graceful swimming. A turtle’s shell is made of layers of keratin (the same material as your fingernail) and helps to protect the turtle. In Canada, freshwater turtles range in size from that of a baseball (musk turtle) to the size of a car wheel (spiny softshell) and come in a variety of colors and shapes. Some, like the wood turtle, have orange skin. The map turtle looks as if it has been scribbled on with a bright-yellow crayon. Blanding’s turtles are shaped like a soldier’s helmet, while a spiny softshell looks more like a pancake.

One of my jobs is to study turtles in the wild because scientists are worried they are going to disappear. Sometimes we call turtles an “indicator species.” This means that when turtles are in trouble, it shows us that there’s something wrong with the wild spaces they are living in. Turtles need clean, healthy water with lots of fish, baby insects, and plants to eat, and they need to be able to live in these spaces for a very long time, which can be a big challenge. Turtles live for over 50 years, and it can take more than 10 years for them to be able to lay eggs. Often places around a turtle’s home change over time. Sometimes there are new buildings or more pollution, making it harder for a turtle to live in that space.

In Genesis 1:28, God calls us to be good stewards of his creation. To be a steward means to take care of something. Being a good steward means making sure all creation, including people, have everything they need: clean

places to live, clean water, and good food to eat. God designed the earth to naturally provide these things. Sometimes humans can change this system, making it harder for all of creation to be healthy and happy. But there are many things we can do to help make it better. That includes little things like trying to make less garbage and putting garbage in a garbage can instead of littering.

TRY THIS

Think about what you can do to be a good steward of God’s creation. It might take a little research. Maybe you can pick up garbage, plant flowers for bees and butterflies, or ride your bike instead of riding in the car. Make a list and hang it on the fridge to remind yourself that your actions can help. You can even challenge your class or school or church to be better stewards through their actions. **B**

Illustration for *The Banner* by Antia Barghigiani



Susie Vander Vaart is an environmental educator and ecologist who spends most of her time outside exploring creation.

