



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

**TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW TIME (03:40)**

**BOG TURTLE (HOST – SARAH LEON WITH ALISON WHITLOCK)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by USFWS Endangered Species Program

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: Hello there. This is Sarah Leon with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and I'm on the phone today with Alison Whitlock, the Service's Bog Turtle Recovery Coordinator. Hi, Alison. How are you today?

MS. WHITLOCK: I'm fine, thanks. How are you?

MS. LEON: Doing well, hoping you can tell us a little bit more about this really unique species today.

MS. WHITLOCK: Sure, I'd be glad to. First, let me just give you an overall picture of the bog turtle. It's found in small, spring-fed wetlands from New York to Georgia. They're found in small and often isolated populations with a spotty distribution throughout its range. There's even a 250-mile gap in its range in Virginia, and that gap separates the northern versus the southern populations of bog turtles.

It's the northern bog turtles that are found in seven states from New York to Maryland that are federally listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and they receive full protection under that law.

Bog turtles are only about four inches in size, and they live in shallow waters with muddy pockets. They lay an average of only three eggs after reaching maturity, somewhere between the ages of six and ten. They prefer snails and slugs to eat.

And they're active from April to October and hibernate in spring-fed waters underneath the roots of vegetation.

MS. LEON: Now, what are the major reasons behind this species' decline?

MS. WHITLOCK: Bog turtles have declined and are continuing to be threatened by habitat loss, habitat degradation, and poaching for the pet trade. These man-made threats make them all the more vulnerable to naturally-occurring threats, such as predation and disease.

But the good news is that many agencies and organizations and private individuals are working together to protect and restore habitat for the bog turtle.

The state wildlife agencies have taken the lead, with support from the Fish and Wildlife Service, to work with land trusts and non-government organizations to permanently protect bog turtle sites. We also have three national wildlife refuges that are working to protect bog turtles.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is also working with other government agencies, such as NRCS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to implement programs, such as WRP, the Wetlands Reserve Program, and the new Working Lands for Wildlife Program.

These programs help us to engage private individuals to conserve bog turtle wetlands that are found on their property. Many private landowners are even working with law enforcement to help identify individuals engaging in trespass, illegal collection, and habitat destruction.

MS. LEON: All right. So, Alison, why do we care about the recovery of this species?

MS. WHITLOCK: Well, beyond having the legal mandate to save them, we should want to save them. The bog turtle's a truly unique species. It is the smallest and the rarest turtle in North America. But they're not unlike us, in that they are dependent upon unpolluted, free-flowing groundwater. They may serve as an indicator of clean and functioning hydrologic systems upon which so many species depend.

We should not only be concerned about the loss of clean groundwater for our own sake, but also acknowledge our responsibility as stewards for these unique and thoroughly charming animals.

MS. LEON: Well, thank you so much, Alison, for taking the time to tell us more about the bog turtle today. It was a real pleasure having you on. For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Sarah Leon. Thanks for listening.