



Get Social During #WildTurtleWeek 2023

Join the **slow and steady movement** on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest **May 22 - 26, 2023!** #WildTurtleWeek is a collaborative initiative between the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to shell-e-brate all things related to turtles for one week, beginning Monday May 22nd, 2023, the day before World Turtle Day®.

Each day, we'll be highlighting our native turtle species, why they matter, and what the public can do to help us conserve them. We hope that you find this content useful to share, and of course, we encourage you to create your own as well and tag us!

Images for Social Media:

Download [Instagram content and infographics](#) for Wild Turtle Week on fws.gov (find sample posts by day below) and on [the Wakelet](#).

Hashtags:

#WildTurtleWeek
#EveryTurtleCounts
#KeepWildTurtlesWild
#TurtlesinTrouble
#WorldTurtleDay

Accounts to follow:

Instagram: [@usfws](#)

Twitter: [@PARCorg](#), [@herpetALLogy](#), [@USFWS](#), [@USFWSIntl](#)

Facebook: [USFWS](#), [PARC](#), [USFWS International Affairs](#)

Pinterest: [@usfws](#)

Links to resources:

- Visit the Wild Turtle Week page on the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) page for the [social media toolkit, turtle activities, and more!](#)
- Visit our Wild Turtle Week album on the USFWS Flickr account [for public domain images of turtles](#)
- Visit the USFWS Pinterest page to [download turtle infographics, coloring pages, and activities](#)
- Visit Wild Turtle Week on FWS.gov for [content on turtle conservation](#), including [Wild Turtle Week infographics and coloring pages](#)

Daily Themes

1. [Monday, May 22](#): **Turtley Awesome**: Why turtles are special
2. [Tuesday, May 23](#): **Turtles Need Our Help**: Threats turtles face
3. [Wednesday, May 24](#): **Every Turtle Counts**: Turtle populations can't afford extra losses
4. [Thursday, May 25](#): **Turtle Power**: Turtles play important roles in their ecosystems
5. [Friday, May 26](#): **Be a Good Turtle Neighbor**: Everyone can play a role in helping turtles

Monday, May 22: **Turtley Awesome**: Why turtles are special

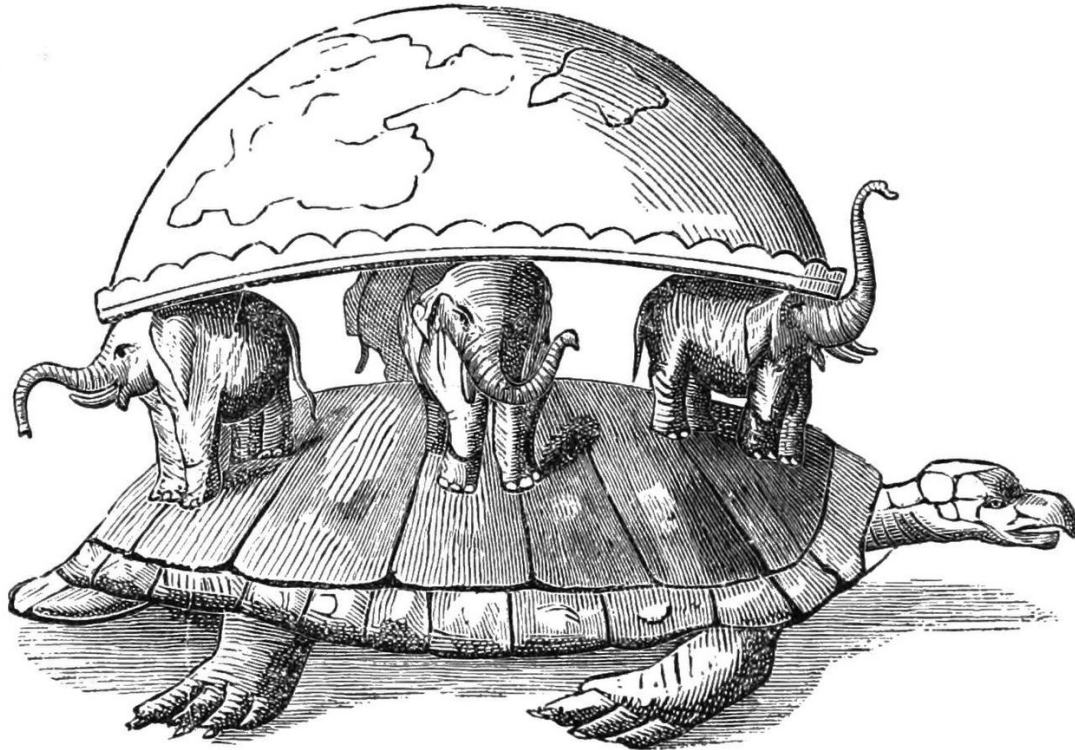
#WildTurtleWeek

Turtles have been roaming the earth since the days of the dinosaurs – some fossils date back more than 220 million years. They hold cultural significance for many societies, and play important roles in the environment. Some plant species depend upon turtles for habitat and to disperse their seeds!

The U.S. is a global hotspot for turtle biodiversity. We are home to a greater number of terrestrial and freshwater turtle species than any other single country. Some species are found only here.

Suggested posts (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Twitter*):

1. About 66 million years ago, a sudden mass extinction event wiped out three-quarters of plant and animal life on earth, including some legendary reptiles. But not turtles! These ancient reptiles endured, and during Wild Turtle Week, we're shell-e-brating the important roles they play in the environment and our heritage.
2. The U.S. is a global hotspot for turtle biodiversity, home to more than 60 known turtle species. Many turtle species are found only here, and they are all turtle awesome! What is your favorite turtle species?
3. Did you know? [Insert a fun fact from [the species-specific content section](#), which includes sample posts on Blanding's turtle, bog turtle, diamondback terrapin, eastern box turtle, gopher tortoise, mud turtle, painted turtle, spotted turtle, and wood turtle.]
4. Do you like turtles?! We do! Read more about why turtles are special, what threats they face, and how you can help: [Wild Turtle Week | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#)
5. In Chinese mythology, the tortoise is one of the Four Symbols or Four Guardians. The Black Tortoise (玄武) of the North is depicted as a tortoise entwined with a snake, and together, they symbolize longevity.
6. In Hindu mythology, the World Turtle is known as Akūpāra (Sanskrit: अकूपार), and it carries elephants which support the world on their backs.
7. While the average human can live around 80 years, some turtle species can live to be well over 100 years! In fact, the world's oldest living turtle is a Seychelles giant tortoise named Jonathan who is over 190 years old!
8. Want to test out your turtle trivia? Check out our [Wild Turtle Week Kahoot!](#) Play by yourself or with friends to see how much you know.



An 1877 drawing of the world supported on the backs of four elephants, themselves resting on the back of a turtle. Photo is in the public domain.

*Example for Twitter:

About 66 mill. years ago, a mass extinction event wiped out three-quarters of plant & animal life on earth, including some legendary reptiles. But not turtles! These ancient reptiles endured. Help us shell-e-brate their important roles this **#WildTurtleWeek**

📷 by Sam Stukel [@usfws](https://twitter.com/usfws)



Tuesday, May 23: **Turtles Need Our Help:** Threats turtles face

#EveryTurtleCounts

#KeepWildTurtlesWild

#WorldTurtleDay

Turtles are [among the most imperiled vertebrates in the world](#). Over 60 percent of 356 species of turtles worldwide are considered threatened, or are already extinct.

On top of habitat loss, climate change, and car strikes when crossing roads, turtles face growing threats from a danger that's harder to see: illegal collection.

Turtles are collected illegally in the U.S. for the pet trade, food, and traditional medicine. Illegal collection exacerbates the other threats turtles face, making it difficult to keep vulnerable species and populations from the brink of extinction, and to ensure common turtle species stay common.

Suggested posts (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Twitter*):

1. Turtles are one of the most imperiled vertebrate groups in the world – they are in decline everywhere they live. In the U.S., turtle populations face growing threats from habitat loss, climate change, disease, and vehicles when crossing roads. The illegal collection of wild turtles – including for the pet trade – is making matters worse. Help turtles by pledging to never take one out of the wild.
#EveryTurtleCounts

2. If you are thinking about purchasing a pet turtle, familiarize yourself with state, federal, and international wildlife regulations regarding the sale and possession of specific species. Always be sure to inquire about where a turtle came from **before** you consider buying one. Or check local shelters for unwanted pet turtles that need a new home.
3. Did you know? Turtles are sometimes stolen from the wild and sold illegally. [Read about an investigation led by USFWS](#) into an individual who collected diamondback terrapins from the wild illegally to sell in the pet trade.
4. At the recent 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), signatories to the convention voted to increase protections for most herps (reptiles and amphibians) targeted in species proposals, including [36 U.S. native turtle species](#).
5. As a pet owner and consumer, you should make sure that you always purchase herps from a reputable seller/breeder/dealer. Ask questions, including: Where did the animals come from? Were the animals legally acquired? If the juveniles are obviously captive-bred, were the parents legally acquired? Be an educated consumer and help protect the herp species represented in the pet trade. Keep a record of your purchase with receipts in a permanent file so that you will be prepared to apply for permits in the future, if needed.
6. If you suspect someone is illegally collecting or selling wild turtles, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1–844-FWS-TIPS), [visit this page](#), or contact your state wildlife agency. #EveryTurtleCounts
7. Oftentimes, turtle nests can be lost to predators such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, opossums, and even domestic dogs. Some turtle species even make decoy nests to attempt to confuse potential predators. #TurtlesinTrouble #EveryTurtleCounts
8. Did you know? Illegal trade of sea turtle eggs is threatening some species. To track illegal trade, 3D-printed and GPS-enabled decoy sea turtle eggs (called InvestEggators) have been placed in sea turtle nests and helped investigators gather key information on the illegal trade in sea turtle eggs. [Read more here](#).
9. Stop! That's not an orphan! Each year, well-meaning people take tiny turtles from the wild, thinking they are orphaned. However, young turtles are capable of surviving on their own after hatching. Removal of any turtle from the wild can hurt local populations, so let's #KeepWildTurtlesWild and remember that #EveryTurtleCounts.
10. Trafficking poses conservation concerns for America's turtles. [Read more about the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles](#), an interdisciplinary collaboration that focuses on ways to better understand, prevent and eliminate the illegal collection and trade of North America's native turtles.

***Example for Twitter:**

Turtles are one of the most imperiled vertebrate groups globally. In the U.S., threats include habitat loss, climate change, disease, vehicles when crossing roads, and illegal collection. Help turtles by pledging to never take one out of the wild.

#KeepWildTurtlesWild #WildTurtleWeek

Take the Turtle Protector Pledge because #EveryTurtleCounts

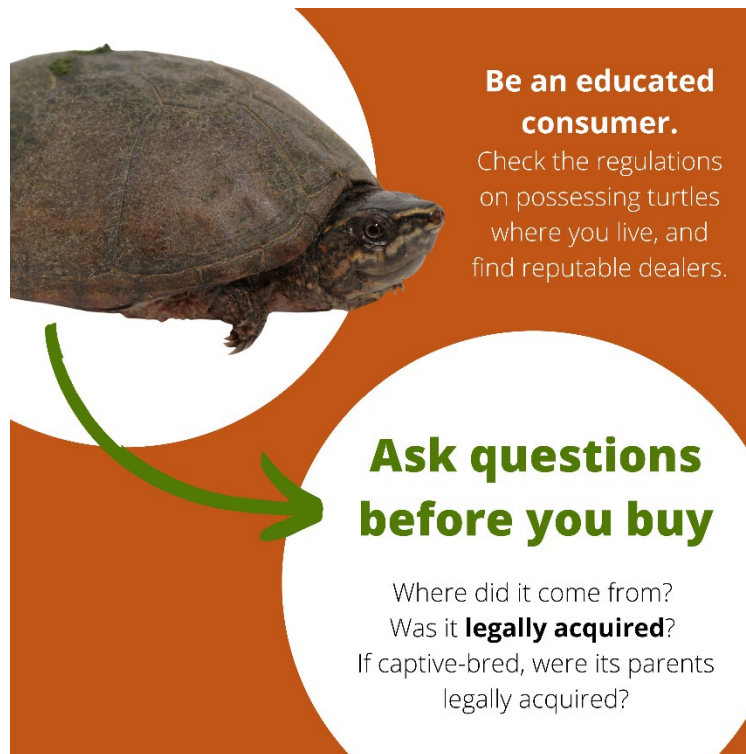
I pledge to:

- 1** Never take a turtle home from the wild.
- 2** If it's safe to do so, help turtles cross the road in the direction they are going.
- 3** Never release a pet turtle in the wild, where it could harm native species.
- 4** Protect turtle habitat by leaving no trace, and leaving no trash.
- 5** Spread the word that #everyturtlecounts

.....
signature



*Example for Twitter:

An infographic with an orange background. On the left, a photograph of a turtle is shown in a white circular frame. A green arrow points from the turtle towards a white circular callout on the right. The callout contains text about asking questions before buying a turtle.

Be an educated consumer.
Check the regulations on possessing turtles where you live, and find reputable dealers.

Ask questions before you buy

Where did it come from?
Was it **legally acquired**?
If captive-bred, were its parents legally acquired?

Wednesday, May 24: **Every Turtle Counts**: Turtle populations can't afford extra losses

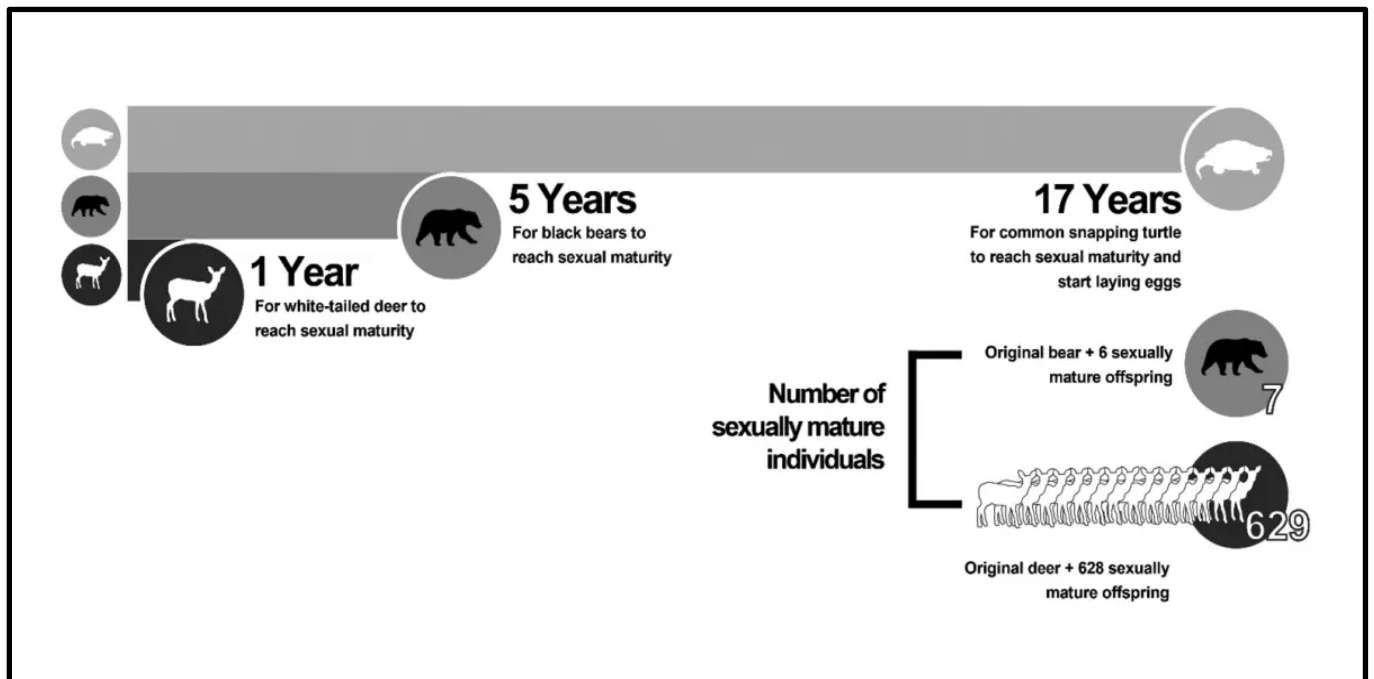
#WildTurtleWeek
#EveryTurtleCounts

Turtles are renowned for their long lives, but they also take a long time to reach reproductive age – often a decade or more. Because most hatchling turtles don't survive that long (they are bite-sized snacks for predators), adults often must reproduce for their entire lives to ensure just one hatchling makes it to reproductive age to help sustain the population.

That means the loss of adult turtles can have serious implications for their populations. When people take turtles out of the wild, they put entire populations at risk.

Suggested posts (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Twitter*):

1. You probably already know that turtles live for a long time. But did you know it also takes turtles a long time – often 10 years or more – to reach reproductive age? If they make it at all. Most hatchlings don't survive because they are bite-sized snacks for predators.
2. Adult turtles must reproduce for their entire lives to increase the odds that one of their offspring will also survive long enough to reproduce, and help sustain the population. For that reason, turtles are especially vulnerable to illegal collection. When people take individual turtles, they put populations at risk.
3. If you suspect someone is illegally collecting or selling wild turtles, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1-844-FWS-TIPS), [visit this page](#), or contact your state wildlife agency.
4. Did you know? Some snapping turtles take up to 17 years to be able to breed. During that time, a black bear may have produced up to seven offspring, and a white-tailed deer may have produced up to 628 offspring! That's why #EveryTurtleCounts. ([See graphic by Melissa Gonzalez/USFWS](#)).



***Example for Twitter:**

Please help: If you suspect someone is illegally collecting or selling wild turtles, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1-844-FWS-TIPS), [visit this page](#), or contact your state wildlife agency. #KeepWildTurtlesWild #EveryTurtleCounts #WildTurtleWeek

EVERY TURTLE COUNTS

Turtle populations can't afford extra losses.

IT TAKES A LONG TIME.

Turtles live for a long time. But it also takes turtles a long time – **often 10 years or more** – to reach reproductive age. . . . If they make it at all.



BITE-SIZE SNACKS.

Most hatchlings don't survive their first few years.. Many predators see baby turtles as **tasty treats**.



FACING NEW DANGERS.

Road mortality has been identified as a major threat to many turtle species. Sadly, many road fatalities are **females looking to nest**.



CHANCES ARE SLIM.

Adult females often must reproduce for their entire lives to ensure just **one hatchling** makes it to reproductive age to help sustain the population.



Loss of adult turtles can have serious implications for their populations. When people take turtles out of the wild, they put entire populations at risk.

Thursday, May 25: **Turtle Power**: Turtles play important roles in their ecosystems

#WorldTurtleDay

#WildTurtleWeek

Turtles are predators, prey, decomposers, seed sowers, and ecosystem engineers. The loss of individual turtles has long-term costs for their populations, and for the wildlife, fish, and plants that share their habitats.

Suggested posts:

- See [the species-specific content section](#) for sample posts on Blanding's turtle, bog turtle, diamondback terrapin, eastern box turtle, gopher tortoise, mud turtle, painted turtle, snapping turtle, softshell turtle, spotted turtle, and wood turtle.

Friday, May 26: **Be a Good Turtle Neighbor**: Everyone can play a role in helping turtles

#WorldTurtleDay
#WildTurtleWeek

Everyone can play a role in conserving turtles. You can help by minimizing disturbances to wild turtles, being a conscientious consumer, and reporting suspicious behavior.

Suggested posts (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Twitter* or Instagram**):

1. Ah springtime...birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and turtles are on the move. As the weather warms, turtles go looking for new territory, breeding opportunities, and food. Sometimes these quests require crossing roads, so keep a lookout for turtles when you're driving this time of year. #EveryTurtleCounts
2. One of the best ways to be a good turtle neighbor this time of year is by helping them get across roads, if it's safe for you to do so. [Check out these tips for how to do it right](#)
3. The U.S. has more turtle species than any other country, but many populations are dramatically declining due to habitat loss, road mortality, and illegal collection. We need your help! Check out our card on [Six Ways to Help Turtles](#).
4. Help turtles by creating habitat for them. Northeast PARC has created an educational brochure, [Your Backyard Guide to Helping Amphibians and Reptiles](#), to provide homeowners with information on how to make their backyard a better habitat for wildlife.
5. Nest predators like foxes and raccoons can have a negative impact on wild turtle populations. Give turtles a boost by securing trash, reducing access to human (and pet!) foods, and keeping your yard clean. #EveryTurtleCounts

***Example for Twitter:**

The U.S. has more turtle species than any other country, but many populations are dramatically declining due to habitat loss, road mortality, and illegal collection. Here are 5 ways to help turtles. Please share! **#WildTurtleWeek #WorldTurtleDay**

5 ways to help turtles

Everyone can play a role in conserving turtles. You can help by minimizing disturbances to wild turtles, being a conscientious consumer, and reporting suspicious behavior. Here's how:

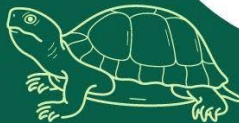


ONE

Keep locations of wild turtles secret, especially online. If you want help identifying a turtle you saw, reach out to a local nature center or your state wildlife agency.

TWO

If it's safe to do so, help turtles cross the road. Don't ever move them to a different location.



THREE

Be a responsible turtle owner - bring unwanted pet turtles to a shelter. Don't release them in the wild. They are unlikely to survive, and could transmit diseases to wild populations.



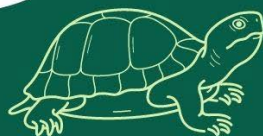
FOUR

Be a good turtle neighbor. There may be things you can do on your land or in your community to support turtles, like creating a backyard habitat.



FIVE

If you suspect someone is illegally collecting or selling wild turtles, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1-844-FWS-TIPS) or visit: www.fws.gov/wildlife-crime-tips



CCITT
COLLABORATIVE TO COMBAT
THE CRIMINAL TRADE IN TURTLES

****Example Instagram carousel:**

5 ways to help turtles

Everyone can play a role in conserving turtles. You can help by minimizing disturbances to wild turtles, being a conscientious consumer, and reporting suspicious behavior.



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photo by Sam Stuke!



Be a responsible turtle owner.

Bring unwanted pet turtles to a shelter. Don't release them in the wild. They are unlikely to survive, and could transmit diseases to wild populations.



Be a good turtle neighbor.

There may be things you can do on your land or in your community to support turtles, like creating a backyard habitat.



If you suspect someone is **illegally collecting or selling wild turtles**, contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at www.fws.gov/wildlife-crime-tips

photo by Gary Peeples



If it's safe to do so, **help turtles cross the road.**
Don't ever move them to a different location.

photo by Patrick Randall

Species-specific content:


Blanding's turtle (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Instagram**)

- **Slow and steady:** Despite the clichés about their kind, Blanding's turtles, a species native to 15 states and maritime Canada, are known for getting around. Individuals often move more than a mile over land in search of suitable habitats for breeding and feeding. Because of their movement patterns, Blanding's turtles

require larger landscapes than many other turtle species, and they are vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and degradation. Habitat fragmentation caused by roads disconnects populations, but also contributes to high road mortalities from cars as they are out searching for mates and nesting habitat.

- Blanding's turtles are thought to be one of North America's longer-lived turtle species, reaching up to 80 years in the wild.

****Example Instagram post:**



Because of their movement patterns, **Blanding's turtles** require larger landscapes than many other turtle species, and they are vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and degradation.

Did you know?

Blanding's turtles are known for getting around! Individuals often move more than a mile over land in search of suitable vernal pool habitats for breeding and feeding.

Bog turtle

- Small, but mighty: the bog turtle, a federally threatened species, is the smallest turtle species in North America, and one of the smallest in the world, maxing out at 4.5 inches.
- Goats to the rescue! Bog turtles need open, wet meadows, so trees that colonize wetlands can be an issue. Instead of using heavy machinery to remove trees,

some biologists are using goats to help browse the vegetation and keep the wetlands open. [Read more here.](#)

- Did you know? Bog turtles weigh around 110 grams on average. That is the same weight as 42 pennies, 4 AA batteries, or a bar of soap!
- Turtles through Time. The late J. Alan Holman discovered fossilized bog turtle remains in Cumberland Cave, Maryland. The remains were dated to the Irvingtonian age (from 1.8 million to 300,000 years ago). Glaciation caused a large population decline in bog turtles, and as the glaciers receded, bog turtles populated parts of their current northern range. Because of extensive habitat loss around the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, the northern and southern populations of bog turtles are believed to be genetically isolated.

Diamondback terrapin

- Living on the edge: Diamondback terrapins are the only turtle, and the only reptile, that is known to spend its entire life in coastal, brackish marshlands. Brackish water is water that is saltier than fresh water but less salty than sea water.
- They play important roles in keeping marsh life in check by eating marsh periwinkle snails, which, left to their own devices, can graze a marsh down to mud. A denuded marsh is less effective at dampening waves and providing a buffer against destructive storms that threaten coastal communities. [Read more here.](#)
- Diamondback terrapins can be inadvertently killed in crab traps, but use of simple and low-cost bycatch reduction devices (BRD) on traps can help them escape. Help turtles and add a BRD! [Read more here.](#)

Eastern box turtle (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Instagram**)

- Did You Know? The eastern box turtle is one of the primary seed dispersers for the spring-flowering mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*). Seeds consumed by box turtles also have a higher probability of germinating! (Rust and Roth 1981)
- Some reports mention that box turtles can live up to 100 years, but their typical lifespan is estimated at 50-80 years.
- It's getting hot in here, and climate change may affect box turtle reproduction. The sex of box turtle eggs is dependent upon temperature. Eggs incubate in nests that average 22-27 degrees C tend to be males, and those in nests above 28 degrees tend to be female.

- Box turtles are the official state reptiles of four states! Both North Carolina and Tennessee have the eastern box turtle as their state reptile while Missouri honors the three-toed box turtle and Kansas names the ornate box turtle.
- How much do you know about box turtles? [Check out this video from Department of Defense PARC](#) on box turtles.

****Example Instagram post:**



Did you know?

Seeds consumed by box turtles have a higher probability of germinating!

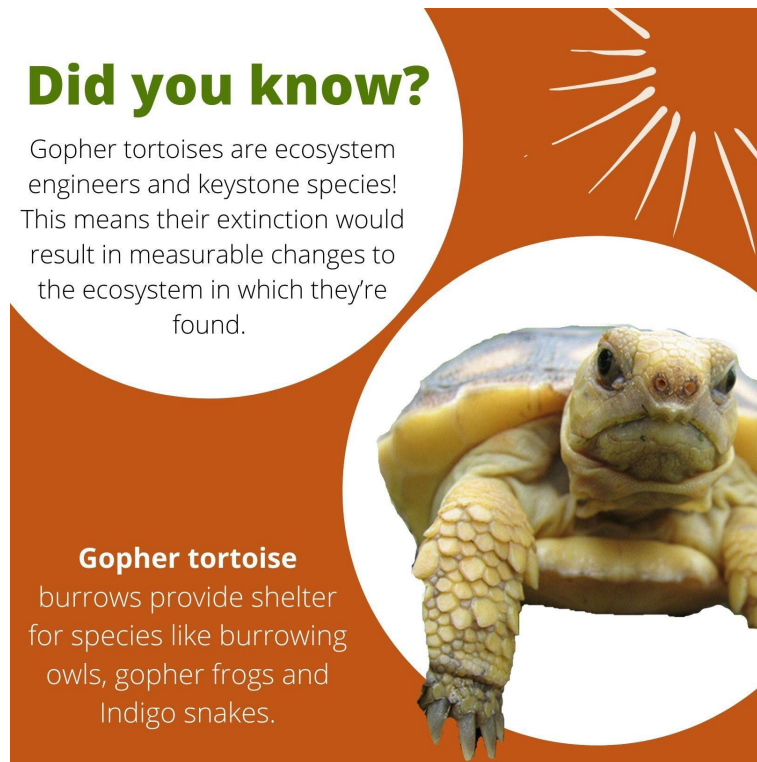
The **eastern box turtle** is one of the primary seed dispersers for the spring-flowering mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*).

Gopher tortoise (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Instagram**)

- The gopher tortoise is one of five North American tortoise species and the only one found east of the Mississippi River.
- The gopher tortoise is federally listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act only in the portion of its range occurring west of the Mobile and Tombigbee Rivers in Alabama (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1987). In the eastern portion of its range, the gopher tortoise is a candidate species for federal protection (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2011).

- Good neighbors: Gopher tortoises are ecosystem engineers and keystone species, meaning their extinction would result in measurable changes to the ecosystem in which they're found. Gopher tortoise burrows, which range from 2-30 ft long and 6-8 ft deep, provide shelter for commensal species like burrowing owls, gopher frogs, and indigo snakes.
- Burn, baby, burn: Fire is a natural part of the ecosystems where gopher tortoises live. Gopher tortoises rely on prescribed burning to keep habitats shrublike and sunny to ensure adequate food. Fire is an important ecosystem management tool to ensure fuel loads in the forest remain low enough to keep large and destructive wildfires at bay.
- Gopher tortoises are often relocated because they dig their burrows in sandy, well-drained soil that is prime real estate for development.
- Have you heard about the Gopher Tortoise recovery project at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB)? This unique partnership with the Natural Resources Institute, Eglin Air Force Base and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is designed to benefit gopher tortoise populations on the military installation through translocation of threatened tortoise communities across Florida. Learn more with this Department of Defense PARC (DoD PARC) podcast [here](#).

****Example Instagram post:**



Did you know?

Gopher tortoises are ecosystem engineers and keystone species! This means their extinction would result in measurable changes to the ecosystem in which they're found.

Gopher tortoise
burrows provide shelter for species like burrowing owls, gopher frogs and Indigo snakes.

Mud turtle

- Mud turtles are in the genus *Kinosternum* which means to “move [their] chest” in Latin. This name refers to the hinged bottom portion of the shell (plastron) on mud turtles.
- As their common name suggests, mud turtles DO like muddy water and often spend a lot of their active time on the bottom of lakes, creeks, and swamps. However, they do also spend a surprising amount of time on land.
- Ohhh, that smell! Did you know? Mud turtles have musk glands along their shell which they use to secrete a stinky odor when they feel threatened. Musk glands are also known as Rathke's glands and can be found in other species of turtles.

Painted turtle

- Painted turtles are some of the most common and widespread turtle species in North America. Unfortunately, it is difficult to track their expanding range due to widespread releases of pet turtles.
- Did you know? There are four recognized subspecies of painted turtles, each with a different geographic distribution and distinct characteristics. To tell the difference between the subspecies, you usually have to look at the characteristics (size and coloration) of the shell.
- While painted turtles can lay clutches up to 23 eggs at a time, they experience high rates of nest failure. It is estimated that only 8% of nests survive (Wilbur 1975).

****Example Instagram post:**



Painted turtles are some of the most common and widespread turtle species in North America. Unfortunately, it is difficult to track their expanding range due to widespread releases of pet turtles.

Did you know?

While painted turtles can lay clutches up to 23 eggs at a time, they experience high rates of nest failure. It is estimated that only 8% of nests survive (Wilbur 1975).



Snapping turtle

- Alligator snapping turtles are the largest species of freshwater turtle in North America. Their fossils date back to the late Cretaceous Period, about 100 million years ago. These ancient reptiles are primitive in appearance, characterized by a large head, long tail, and a powerful upper jaw with a strong hooked beak. Males can weigh more than 200 pounds, while females top out around 60 pounds.
- While not as large as the alligator snapping turtle, the common snapping turtle is a relatively large turtle, characterized by a big head with a sharp hooked upper jaw, a long tail, and a rough, dark brown shell.
- Common snapping turtles and alligator snapping turtles can be distinguished by their size as adults, but juveniles of the species look similar and are the primary targets of the trade.
- Between 2013 and 2019, more than 700,000 common snapping turtles and more than 200,000 alligator snapping turtles were exported from the U.S., most destined for Southeast Asia and Europe for use as food or traditional medicine.

- Did you know? Biologically, [turtles are more vulnerable to these losses](#) than other wildlife because of their reproductive strategies. Snapping turtles may take 17 years to reach reproductive age, if they make it at all. Most eggs and hatchlings don't survive, falling victim to predators like foxes, skunks, and raccoons. To replace itself in its population, a turtle must first survive long enough to reach maturity, and then must reproduce for its entire adult life — many decades — to ensure one or two eggs hatch and make it to adulthood as well.
- Without checks on the number of turtles that are taken from the wild, we risk losing future generations, populations, and ultimately, entire species.
- At the recent 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), member countries decided to [increase protections for alligator and common snapping turtles, as well as most other herps \(reptiles and amphibians\) targeted in species proposals](#).
- The inclusion of alligator and common snapping turtles in CITES Appendix II went into effect in February 2023, and will help address illegal trade threats, support biologically sustainable use through legal trade, and complement domestic protections.
- You can help: If you suspect someone is illegally collecting or selling protected turtle species, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1-844-FWS-TIPS), [visit this page](#), or contact your state wildlife agency.

****Example Instagram post:**



Did you know?

In a recent 6-year period, **more than 700,000 common snapping turtles** were exported from the U.S.

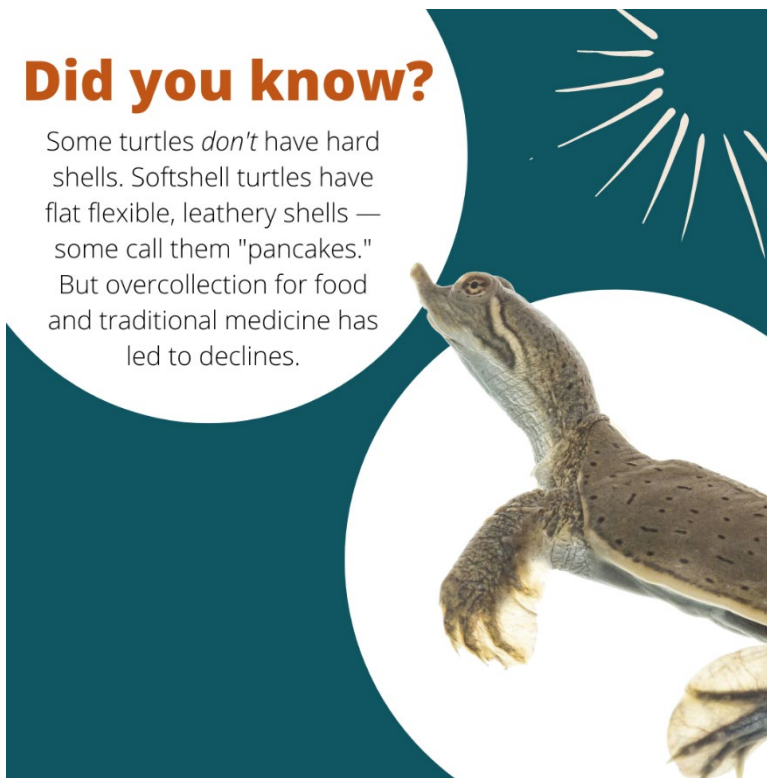
Can they keep pace with demand?

The **common snapping turtle** generally takes at least a decade to reach reproductive age, and the rest of its life to produce an offspring that survives to adulthood too.

Softshell turtle

- Did you know? Unlike most other turtles, softshell turtles have flat, leathery shells that are flexible, rather than hard and rigid. Some compare their appearance to a pancake. These aquatic turtles are well adapted for the water, with webbed feet, long necks, and tubular snouts that resemble a snorkel.
- Softshell turtles face threats from habitat loss and degradation, and from the legal and illegal trade for food and traditional medicine. While these species can be bred in captivity, they are easily caught and trapped in the wild, thereby making wild populations vulnerable to exploitation.
- Since February, softshell turtles native to the United States are included in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). [A CITES Appendix II listing will complement existing management efforts by states](#), reducing the risk of overharvesting, and supporting sustainable trade in our native turtles.
- You can help: If you suspect someone is illegally collecting or selling softshell turtles or other protected turtle species, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1-844-FWS-TIPS), [visit this page](#), or contact your state wildlife agency.

****Example Instagram post:**



Spotted turtle

- How much do you know about spotted turtles? [Check out this video from Department of Defense PARC](#) on spotted turtles.
- As spotted turtles age, the number of spots on their shell also increases! Underneath the spotted turtle's scutes are yellow pigments, and the spots are actually "windows" in the scutes. The spots help with camouflage.

Wood turtle

- You've heard of the Time Warp, but how about the Worm Stomp? Wood turtles exhibit a unique behavior in the reptile world that entails stomping their feet and shell on the ground. The turbulence imitates falling rain or the movement of moles underground, tricking worms into coming to the surface where they can be eaten.
- Both the common name "wood turtle" and the species scientific name, *Glyptemys insculpta*, refer to the carved look of its shell. "Insculpta" means engraved or sculpted. That's because the plate-like scales – called scutes – on a wood turtle's shell build up and wear down year-after-year, giving it the appearance of a wood carving showing the growth rings of a tree.