



# Get Social During #WildTurtleWeek 2022

Join the **slow and steady movement** on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest **May 23 - 27, 2022!** #WildTurtleWeek is a collaborative initiative between the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to shell-e-brate all things related to turtles for one week, beginning on World Turtle Day – Monday May 23rd, 2022.

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).

## Hashtags:

#WildTurtleWeek  
#EveryTurtleCounts  
#BuyInformed  
#KeepTurtlesWild  
#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](#)

## Daily Themes

1. [Monday, May 23](#): **Turtley Awesome**: Why turtles are special
2. [Tuesday, May 24](#): **Turtles Need Our Help**: Threats turtles face
3. [Wednesday, May 25](#): **Every Turtle Counts**: Turtle populations can't afford extra losses
4. [Thursday, May 26](#): **Turtle Power**: Turtles play important roles in their ecosystems
5. [Friday, May 27](#): **Be a Good Turtle Neighbor**: Everyone can play a role in helping turtles

## Monday, May 23: **Turtley Awesome**: Why turtles are special

#WorldTurtleDay

#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 turtley 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 \(fws.gov\)](#)

\*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](#)



## Tuesday, May 24: **Turtles Need Our Help**: Threats turtles face

#EveryTurtleCounts

#BuyInformed

#KeepTurtlesWild

Turtles are [among the most imperiled vertebrates in the world](#). At least 61 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.
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: <https://fws.gov/story/2021-06/turtle-interrupted>
4. 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 email ([fws\\_tips@fws.gov](mailto:fws_tips@fws.gov)), or contact your state wildlife agency. #EveryTurtleCounts

\*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. [#KeepTurtlesWild](#)  
[#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



## Wednesday, May 25: **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) or email ([fws\\_tips@fws.gov](mailto:fws_tips@fws.gov)), or contact your state wildlife agency.

\*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) or email ([fws\\_tips@fws.gov](mailto:fws_tips@fws.gov)), or contact your state wildlife agency. [#KeepTurtlesWild](#) [#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 26: **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, spotted turtle, and wood turtle.

Friday, May 27: **Be a Good Turtle Neighbor**: Everyone can play a role in helping turtles

#WorldTurtleDay

#WildTurtleWeek

#BuyInformed

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! [Learn what you can do for turtles](#)

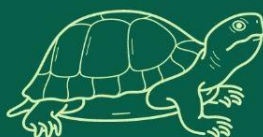
\*Example for Twitter:

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](#) [#BuyInformed](#) [#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:

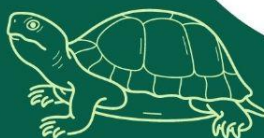


## ONE

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.



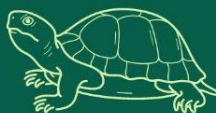
## THREE

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.



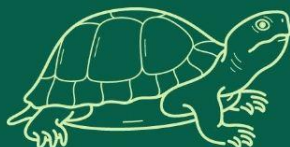
## FOUR

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 email ([fws\\_tips@fws.gov](mailto:fws_tips@fws.gov))



\*\*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.



## 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.

photo by Sam Stukef



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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.



## 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.

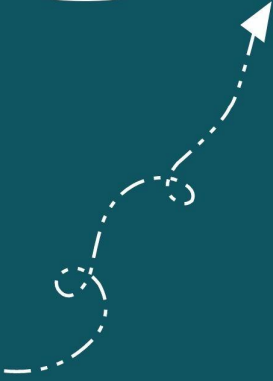
\*\*Example Instagram post:



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.

- 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. (Source: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.162366599>)
- 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!  
(Source: [https://www.vims.edu/research/units/projects/terrapin\\_brds/docs/terrapin\\_bdr\\_brochure.pdf](https://www.vims.edu/research/units/projects/terrapin_brds/docs/terrapin_bdr_brochure.pdf))

## 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 to learn more:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBtGD9KjTgo>

\*\*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.

\*\*Example Instagram post:

## Did you know?

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### **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).

## Snapping turtle

- Did you know? Snapping turtles are voracious predators and will eat anything they can catch. As predators, snapping turtles play an important role in pond food webs. A study by Wilbur (1997) found that the presence of snapping turtles had a positive effect on phytoplankton!
- Snapping turtles can move incredible distances to get to nesting locations, and sometimes, they have to cross the road to get there. As their name suggests, snapping turtles can be a bit defensive, including towards well-meaning folks who try to help them safely cross roads. The best approach is to keep your hands off them entirely by using branches, snow shovels, or similar objects to prod them gently in the right direction.

## Spotted turtle

- How much do you know about spotted turtles? Check out this video from Department of Defense PARC on spotted turtles here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FM1vOnUpf-Q> 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. (Source: <https://movementoflife.si.edu/species/wood-turtle/>)
- 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.