When turtles need help, call for backup

Helping injured turtles. If you find an injured turtle, call your local animal control officer, veterinarian, or humane society for help locating a certified wildlife rehabilitator who is qualified to provide care.

Reporting suspicious behavior. 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), or your state wildlife agency. The Service is authorized to pay rewards for information or assistance that leads to an arrest, a criminal conviction, civil penalty assessment, or forfeiture of seized property. Learn more.

What to Look Out For

- People with bags, poking around in wetlands and along streams, or flipping over logs and rocks.
- Cars parked near forested areas with collection equipment (like nets and containers) visible inside.
- Sheets of metal or plywood that have been laid on the ground to attract cold-blooded reptiles and amphibians.
- Unmarked traps set in wetlands. Traps for research will be clearly marked. (Some states do allow limited trapping for certain species.)
- Unattended backpacks or bags left in the woods, along a trail, or near roads. **Don't ever open a suspicious bag or container - report it to authorities**. It could contain anything from venomous snakes to explosives.

What to Do If You See Something Suspicious

- Maintain a safe distance and protect yourself.
- Note the exact location, what happened, and who was involved (persons, vehicles, and other witnesses).
- Notify your state wildlife agency or the USFWS as soon as possible.
- If it is safe to do so, take photographs that can corroborate your report — for example, the license plate of a vehicle or serial number on a turtle trap.
- **Do NOT confront suspicious persons or try to stop a crime yourself.** Prioritize your safety, and then contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by phone (1–844-FWS-TIPS) or email (fws_tips@fws.gov), or contact your state wildlife agency.