



Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
The Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles
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Subject: Multimedia messaging on why #EveryTurtleCounts

Dear Colleagues:

Join us in recognizing that, in nature, [#EveryTurtleCounts](#). On the heels of [#WildTurtleWeek 2022](#), the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT), a working group of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) has joined forces with our partners, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Turtle Survival Alliance, and Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy to increase awareness on how demand for pet turtles can lead to poaching and removal of turtles from the wild - a trend that is already having devastating biological impacts. Wild turtles are under siege and people who desire a pet turtle may not realize the far reaching and inhumane impacts those choices can have on our wild populations.

Wild North American turtles are an all too frequent target for illegal trade, with box turtles being the number one native North American turtle observed in illegal global trade for pets. Turtles are often portrayed as “easy to care for”, which is not the case – turtles require a lifetime of care (20-80+ years), with specific light, food, and habitat requirements. Promoting or presenting turtles as low maintenance and innocuous pets can lead to increasing their desirability as pets and can have far reaching impacts. Desirability and demand for pet turtles is considered the number one driver of poaching from the wild to meet demand. Taking one female from the wild can reduce population persistence, and taking hundreds or thousands can ultimately threaten a species with extinction. Of the hundreds or thousands of box turtles seized annually by law enforcement officers, most do not survive. These animals are inhumanely treated, often confined with duct tape and stockings and are not provided food or water prior to shipment to evade detection. Further, animals held in these inhumane conditions are more susceptible to disease, and carry and transmit disease to one another and to humans.

We believe a shift is needed in the type of messages portrayed in film and media to better inform people on how wild turtles do not make good pets and why, how demand for turtles as pets drives the illegal trade, how this illegal trade is causing serious and long-term harm, and how to help wild turtles facing a myriad of threats. We also believe that anyone can share common messages about the myriad threats turtles face and how people can help, including those about keeping wild turtles wild, because in nature, #EveryTurtleCounts. To learn more about some of the key messages you can promote, visit PARC’s [#WildTurtleWeek webpage](#), our [#EveryTurtle Counts webpage](#), or the [CCITT webpage](#). You can also learn more about how to help turtles from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by going to [their website](#).

