



2024

# ANNUAL REPORT

Collaborative to Combat the  
Illegal Trade in Turtles



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Prepared by  
The CCITT Leadership Board

The Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) is a Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) national task team formed in 2018 that strives to build a cross-disciplinary and multi-sectoral network of conservation professionals dedicated to addressing the challenges that stem from illegal collection and trade.

The mission of the CCITT is to advance efforts to better understand, prevent, and eliminate the illegal collection and trade of North America's native turtles - a threat that puts many species at risk.

Cover photo by Dennis P. Quinn  
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Visit our Website:  
<https://parcplace.org/species/collaborative-to-combat-the-illegal-trade-in-turtles/>

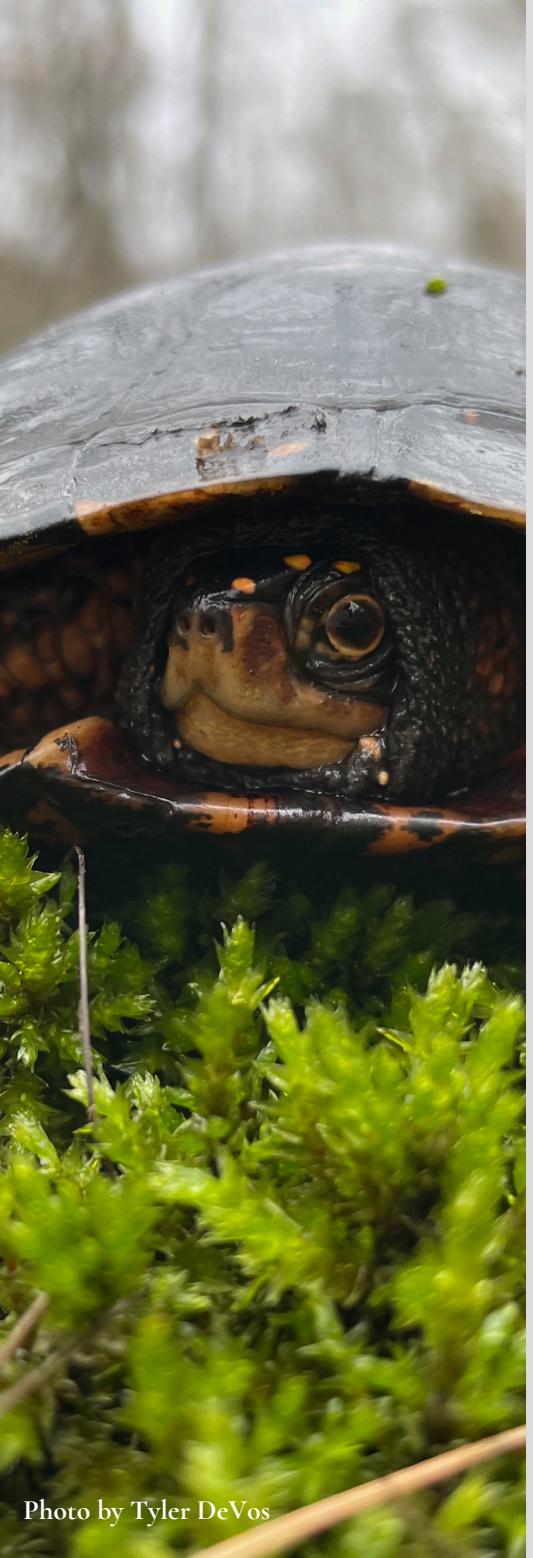


Photo by Tyler DeVos

## CCITT Leadership Board

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### PARC Coordinators:

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Kerry Wixted (AFWA)

PARC TNT Coordinator:  
Cristina Jones (USFWS)

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# THE MISSION CONTINUES



Photo by Tyler DeVos

In 2024, the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) continued to grow its numbers and reach. Membership surpassed 220, deliverables were advanced, outreach initiatives were undertaken, and new ideas sprung to life. It was a year full of firsts, including:

- Conducting our inaugural [Annual Membership Survey](#)
- Leading a global symposium on illegal trade at the [World Congress of Herpetology](#)
- Welcoming the first [CCITT Strategic Coordinator](#) – a new position for the organization.

CCITT also continued with initiatives that support its membership, such as:

- [4th Annual State Roundtable](#): The annual roundtable offers an opportunity for states and provinces to learn from each other by sharing updates on non-sensitive cases, changes in laws or regulations, initiatives or projects focused on illegal turtle trade, and offering suggestions to improve CCITT.
- [Monthly Calls](#): Monthly calls allow the group to provide regular updates to members and bring in guest speakers who share insights, ideas, and research on topics relevant to all working groups. In 2024, monthly calls averaged 42 attendees and eight calls featured guest speakers.
- [Regional Workshops](#): CCITT hosted its second regional workshop on combatting illegal trade of turtles, this time focused on the Midwest. The two-day virtual event garnered significant interest, with more than 300 attendees from multiple disciplines and sectors.

# MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP CHANGES



Photo by Mike Ravesi

Since its founding in 2018, the CCITT has grown substantially in membership. In 2024, the CCITT welcomed 44 new members and expanded to a total of 223 members. The chart at right shows the professional breakdown of our new members.

Additionally, several individuals joined the Leadership Board and Steering Committee:

- Elizabeth Hunter, Ph.D., Assistant Unit Leader - U.S. Geological Survey Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Assistant Professor - Virginia Tech became a Co-chair of the Research and Data Working Group
- Rachel (Rae) Boratto, Ph.D., Wildlife Trade Specialist, Monitor Conservation Research Society became CCITT's first Canada Liaison



*Professions of the 45 new members who joined in 2024*

# EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS



Above: CCITT Workshop participants at NCTC January 2024

One of the most effective ways for CCITT to raise awareness, educate, network, and advance its mission is through presentations and workshops. CCITT members provided talks at a number of conferences in 2024. Additionally, CCITT teamed with Foundations of Success to facilitate a workshop with over 40 stakeholders from across the United States and Canada. This multidisciplinary cohort of professionals met at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to strategize on how best to address the problem of illegal turtle trade - work that has been critical towards the development of the CCITT Strategic Plan. Below is a brief summary of CCITT presentations and events from 2024.

- January- hosted writing workshop to frame CCITT's first Strategic Plan at National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, West Virginia.
- February- held two-day virtual workshop on illegal turtle trade, with focus on the Midwest.
- May- hosted virtual meet-and-greet and provided overview of CCITT to Canadian counterparts.
- July- presented on CCITT at the Northeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) annual meeting at Schoodic Institute, Winter Harbor, Maine.
- August- hosted symposium and breakout sessions on illegal and unsustainable trade in amphibians and reptiles at the World Congress of Herpetology in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
- November- held virtual training on repatriation of confiscated turtles.
- December- presented overview of illegal turtle trade on a webinar for the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators.



Above: Symposium team members at World Congress of Herpetology 2024

The World Congress of Herpetology (WCH) is a meeting that occurs every three to four years. The week-long event attracts herpetologists from academia, government agencies, non-government organizations, and other fields from around the globe. It therefore represents a premier opportunity for broad outreach on all topics herpetofauna.

A team that included CCITT representatives and partners planned and hosted a symposium titled *Reducing the Illegal and Unsustainable Trade in Reptiles and Amphibians* at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Herpetology in Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo.

The symposium was the result of collective efforts by individuals from the CCITT Steering Committee and Working Groups, and collaborators from numerous North American and international NGOs, agencies, and universities. The goals of the symposium included introducing CCITT on an international stage, communicating with and learning from the global herpetological community, and networking and building relationships.

The symposium portion was open to all WCH attendees, both in-person and online via live streaming. Global experts presented on case studies and research, and a panel discussion focused on the issue of laundering herpetofauna through legal trade.

Subsequent breakout sessions were open to invitees with specific expertise on illegal trade of herpetofauna. Topics of interest during these sessions included laws and regulations, confiscation and repatriation, demand/demand reduction, and a focus on next steps.

# CCITT'S FIRST STRATEGIC COORDINATOR



CCITT reached a major milestone in 2024 by welcoming its first ever Strategic Coordinator, Dr. Brooke Talley. This new position was made possible by a private philanthropic donation and is being administered through a partnership with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy.

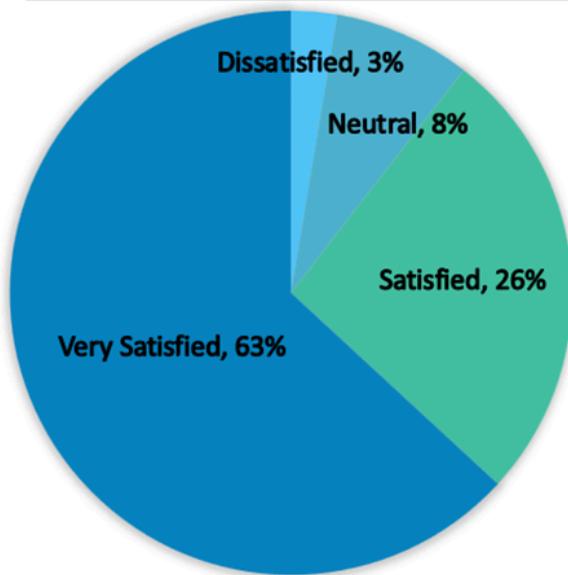
Brooke has a wealth of experience that allowed her to hit the ground running. She earned her Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University in May 2014, with a focus on disease ecology and herpetology. Following her studies, Brooke honed her regulatory and wildlife management skillset through working for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as the Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Coordinator, and more recently as the Alligator Management Program Coordinator. She brings many years of expertise managing and coordinating multi-year, large-scale herpetological projects, undertaking regulatory actions through the rule development process and other legislative actions, training and coordinating with law enforcement, and working with multiple user groups such as breeders, hobbyists, and researchers.

Brooke is a long-time member of CCITT, joining in 2019. She is eager to help the group continue to grow and advance its mission. Among a variety of initiatives, Brooke will focus on building law enforcement capacity, working toward reducing demand for illegally traded turtles, and managing data on illegal trade. Brooke's presence brought immediate productivity, creativity, and positive energy to CCITT.

This hiring would not have been possible without the sustained help of Dr. JJ Apodaca and the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy team, as well as the generous philanthropic donation.

# FIRST ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE

## CCITT monthly calls - Levels of satisfaction & Ideas for improvement



Unknown contact said:

"I think it would be good to change the format on occasion, to keep attendees engaged. For instance, adding more "workshopping" or similar to the mix. I have not heard others voicing this as a need, this is just my opinion."

Unknown contact said:

"For the committee reports, have them issue 2-3 bullets each month of what they want the members to know about their work; this would coincide with their reports. Could speed things up but, more importantly, it will get their point across."

Unknown contact said:

"Engagement with CCITT members is good, topics are timely and updates are worthwhile of our time. Promoting member involvement at a level that is more than 'attending a monthly meeting' seems like it could be improved, but even then, keeping CCITT-related topics front-of-mind for members is an overall fantastic objective."

In 2024, the CCITT launched its inaugural Annual Survey. The Annual Survey was composed of 20 questions, and a separate Membership Questionnaire that included 11 questions. Both question sets were designed with input from the Steering Committee, and they were circulated to all members via MailChimp.

The intent of the Annual Survey is to collect information on member satisfaction, to measure how members are engaged with the organization, to assess thoughts and experiences related to illegal turtle trade, to inform strategic planning, and ultimately to strengthen the CCITT community.

The Annual Survey, which is carried out anonymously, provides a unique opportunity for members to voice their thoughts. Individuals expressed their opinions on all things CCITT- monthly meeting topics, monthly meeting format, and general operation, to name a few. Information provided by respondents will help CCITT improve its efforts in the future. The goal is to ask a subset of the same questions every year to gain insight on trends over time.

