



Get Social During #WildTurtleWeek

Join the **slow and steady movement** to shell-e-brate wild turtles and tortoises on Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other platforms every year during the **second week of June!**

- [What is Wild Turtle Week?](#)
- [How you can participate](#)
- [Social media toolkit](#)
 - ◆ [Images and graphics](#)
 - ◆ [Informational resources](#)
 - ◆ [Daily themes and sample content](#)
 - ◆ [Species-specific fun facts to share](#)




What is Wild Turtle Week?

#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 the Monday before World Sea Turtle Day.

Each day, we'll be highlighting North American native turtle species, why they matter, and what the public can do to help us conserve them.

How you can participate

- **Share fun facts and conservation-minded content** on turtles and tortoises. Feel free to pull directly from our [social media toolkit](#), which includes:
 - Images and graphics
 - Informational resources
 - Daily themes and sample social-media content
 - Species-specific fun facts to share

- **Don't share locations of wild turtles** in your posts to protect turtles and their habitats.
 -  **Please avoid sharing sensitive information** — including exact locations — for wild turtles and other species. This includes details about rare or protected species, species popular in the pet trade, and nesting or denning sites. Publicly sharing this kind of information can unintentionally invite poaching or increased human traffic, which may damage habitats and put stress on local populations.
 -  **Before posting photos**, double-check that geotags, visible landmarks, or metadata aren't revealing the turtle's location. Turning off your device's location settings can help prevent accidental sharing.
 - Let's work together to protect turtles while we celebrate them! 
- **Use hashtags consistently** to help us track engagement.
 - #WildTurtleWeek
 - #EveryTurtleCounts
 - #KeepWildTurtlesWild
 - #TurtlesInTrouble
 - #TurtelyAwesome
 - #TurtlesNeedOurHelp
 - #TurtlePower
 - #GoodTurtleNeighbor
- **Follow these accounts:**
 - Instagram: [USFWS](#), [PARC](#), [ARC](#)
 - X (Twitter): [USFWS](#), [ARC](#)
 - Facebook: [USFWS](#), [PARC](#), [ARC](#)

Wild Turtle Week Google Drive

WTW Content

Contains content for each day as well as additional image and video assets, educational materials, and content in Spanish.

Social Media Toolkit

- ❖ [Images and graphics](#)
- ❖ [Informational resources](#)
- ❖ [Daily themes and sample content](#)
 1. [Monday: Monday: Turtley Awesome](#): Why turtles are special

2. [Tuesday](#): **Turtles Need Our Help**: Threats turtles face
 3. [Wednesday](#): **Every Turtle Counts**: Turtle populations can't afford extra losses
 4. [Thursday](#): **Turtle Power**: Turtles play important roles in their ecosystems
 5. [Friday](#): **Be a Good Turtle Neighbor**: Everyone can play a role in helping turtles
- ❖ [Species-specific fun facts to share](#)

Images and graphics:

Download images and graphics from [Google Drive](#) (see sample posts below).

Informational 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](#).
- Watch our [engagement webinar](#) for inspiration and ideas on how to get involved.
- Visit the Wild Turtle Week album on the USFWS Flickr account [for public domain images of turtles](#).
- Visit Wild Turtle Week on FWS.gov for [content on turtle conservation](#).

Daily themes and sample content

Daily Themes

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

Monday: **Turtley Awesome**: Why turtles are special

- 1. Monday: Turtley Awesome

#WildTurtleWeek
#TurtleyAwesome

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 X (Twitter*)):

1. 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?
2. Did you know? [Insert a fun fact from [the species-specific content section](#), which includes sample posts on different turtle species.]
3. Do you like turtles?! We do! Read more about why turtles are special, what threats they face, and how you can help: [How you can help turtles | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) #WildTurtleWeek
4. 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.
5. In Hindu mythology, the World Turtle is known as Akūpāra (Sanskrit: अकूपार), and it carries elephants which support the world on their backs. ([Public domain illustration of the World Turtle. Wikimedia Commons](#))
6. Turtle teamwork! Some species of turtles exhibit remarkable social behaviors, showing that they're not just solitary creatures. Read more about [Social Turtles here](#).
7. Did you know? Sea turtles are known for their long-distance migrations. They use the earth's magnetic field to navigate back to their natal (where they were born) beaches to nest after spending many years at sea. ([Public domain image of a loggerhead sea turtle. NOAA](#))
8. Leatherback sea turtles have a unique adaptation – they can measure sunlight through their skulls! This lets them know when to begin their migrations. Leatherbacks have a characteristic 'pink spot' on their head, which is a thin covering of skin over the pineal gland. The pineal gland is responsible for establishing circadian rhythms in the turtles' brains. The skin is thin enough that sunlight can shine through, signaling changing seasons. ([Public domain image of a hatchling leatherback turtle. USFWS](#))
9. The Forbidden Pancake. Have you ever wondered why some turtles have soft shells? The softshell turtle genus (*Apalone*) has shells that are more like leather than the bony shells found on other turtle species. Their shells also lack the large scales known as scutes that make up the hard carapace (top part) of other turtle

species. This flexible shell allows them to easily glide through the water and bury themselves in mud or sand to hide. ([Public domain image of Apalone mutica, the smooth softshell turtle. USFWS](#))

10. **That's so scute!** A scute is one of the hard scales that makes up a turtle's shell. Other animals have scutes, too! Alligators and crocodiles are covered with scutes, as are birds' legs. Some fish even have scutes! Scutes are made of keratin, just like your hair and fingernails. Which begs the question...do we have scutes?

You're pretty *Scute.*

Have you heard of a scute?

A **scute** is a hard scale that makes up a turtle's shell. Scutes are pieces of keratin (*similar to fingernails*) that provide protection to the turtle's shell.

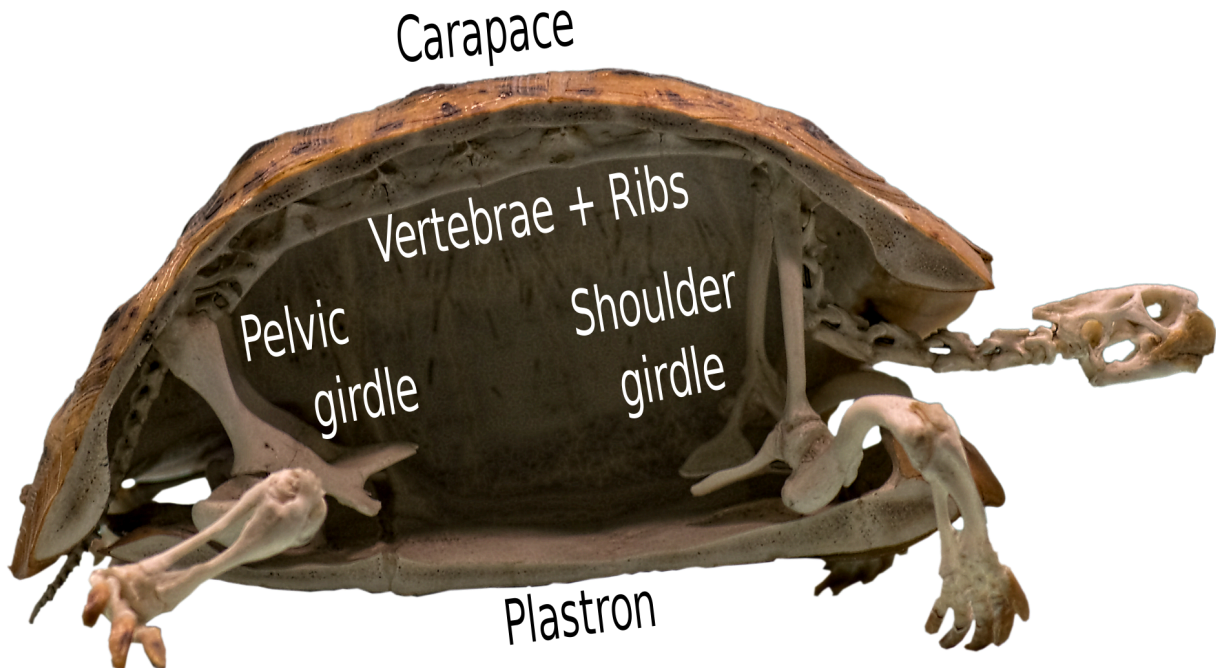
For most turtle species, the scutes do not overlap, but there are exceptions like the **hawksbill sea turtle** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*).



Wild Turtle Week

11. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

- Basking on a log
- Chilling in a bog.
- Swimming in the sea.
- Roaming wild and free.



By Ian Alexander - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=106059541>

*Example for X (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: **Turtles Need Our Help**: Threats turtles face

2. Tuesday: Turtles Needs Our Help

#EveryTurtleCounts

#KeepWildTurtlesWild

#TurtlesNeedOurHelp

Turtles are [among the most imperiled vertebrates in the world](#). More than half of the 360 remaining species face the threat of extinction.

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. 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.

2. 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.
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. #EveryTurtleCounts
4. 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
5. The illegal collection and trade of our native turtles is a grave risk to species that are already vulnerable. [Read more about the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles](#), an interdisciplinary partnership that focuses on understanding, preventing and eliminating the illegal collection and trade of North America’s native turtles.
6. Plastic is not fantastic! Turtles often fall victim to plastic pollution. Let's take a stand against single-use plastics and work towards a cleaner, safer environment for these incredible creatures. ([Public domain image of marine debris being removed from a sea turtle. Credit: NOAA](#))
7. If it's safe for you to do so, help turtles cross the road in the direction they are going.
8. In a world where coral reefs are under siege, every small action counts. Coral reefs are bustling hubs of marine life that provide essential habitats for green sea turtles and millions of other creatures. Yet, they face unprecedented threats, including bleaching exacerbated by chemical pollutants like those found in traditional sunscreens.

But fear not! You hold the power to make a positive difference. This summer, make a splash with reef-safe sunscreen that's kind to both your skin and the environment. Remember, when choosing sunscreen, opt for products containing only zinc oxide and titanium dioxide—active ingredients proven safe for coral reefs.

([Public domain image of a green sea turtle swimming over a reef. NOAA](#))

9. Everyone can play a role in protecting sea turtles! You can help by minimizing disturbances and giving sea turtles a safe, calm nesting ground.
 - a. **Reduce outdoor lighting:** Lights from homes and businesses can disorient and cause both adult sea turtles and hatchlings to get lost. Close the blinds to your home, and invest in turtle friendly lights for outdoor lights

- b. **Keep it dark and quiet:** Sea turtles and hatchlings need beaches to be dark and quiet at night. To keep from disturbing them, don't use: flashlights, fireworks, and/or flash photography.
- c. **Leave no trace:** Leave the beach better than when you found it. Knock down sand castles after building. Fill holes dug in the sand. Leave with what you brought.
- d. **Hands off.** Sea turtles are protected species and should not be handled or touched, except by trained professionals. If you think a sea turtle is hurt, in distress, or lost call the local wildlife alert hotline!

Learn more: [What can you do to save sea turtles? | NOAA](#)

- 10. Want to help turtles? Keep your dog on a leash! Dogs often are good at finding turtles, and can sometimes dig up turtle nests, eat eggs, or hurt delicate hatchlings. To keep wildlife and your pup safe, please keep your pets on a leash. ([Public domain image of western pond turtle hatchlings and eggs. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#))
- 11. Have you heard of hot chicks and cool dudes? In the case of some of our turtle species, the temperature of the nest can affect the sex of the hatchling turtles. Warmer nests usually mean more females are produced while cooler nests mean more males are produced. Learn about how temperature change (particularly with climate change) can affect sea turtle sex ratios with this activity: [Investigating Sea Turtles and Sex Determination](#).

***Example for X (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 keep them safe in the wild. #KeepWildTurtlesWild #WildTurtleWeek

TAKE THE WILD TURTLE PROTECTOR PLEDGE!

I pledge to:

- 1** Leave wild turtles where I find them in the wild.
- 2** Help turtles cross the road, if it's safe to do so.
- 3** Never release a pet turtle into the wild.
- 4** Protect turtle habitat by leaving no trace or trash.
- 5** Spread the word that #EveryTurtleCounts.

.....
Signature



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

▣ 3. Wednesday: Every Turtle Counts

#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), [online form](#), or contact your state wildlife agency.
4. 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.
5. Did you know? Some snapping turtles in northern areas 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](#)).
6. A treaty for turtles (and more): In 2022, 21 species of native U.S. turtles were added to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix II. This action restricts international trade of species like alligator and common snapping turtles, softshell turtles, and musk turtles. By protecting turtles both nationally and internationally, we can work toward keeping wild turtles wild while supporting sustainable trade.
7. Found an injured or sick turtle? Contact a wildlife rehabilitator – You can find a wildlife rehabilitator near you at: [Animal Help Now](#).

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: **Turtle Power**: Turtles play important roles in their ecosystems

4. Thursday: Turtle Power

#WildTurtleWeek

#TurtlePower

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, wood turtle, western painted turtles, and leatherback sea turtle.

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

▣ 5. Friday: Be a Good Turtle Neighbor

#WildTurtleWeek

#TurtleHelper

#GoodTurtleNeighbor

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
6. Creating a turtle-friendly backyard is not only a rewarding endeavor but also a crucial step in supporting local wildlife and promoting biodiversity. Here are some tips to transform your outdoor space into a haven for turtles:
 - a. **Provide Shelter:** Incorporate natural hiding spots like rocks, logs, or dense vegetation where turtles can retreat to feel safe and secure.

These shelters also offer refuge from predators and extreme weather conditions.

- b. **Provide Water:** Install a shallow pond or water feature where turtles can soak, drink, and forage for aquatic plants. Ensure that the water is clean, free from chemicals, and has gently sloping edges to facilitate easy access for turtles.
- c. **Plant Native Plants:** Choose native vegetation for your landscaping, as it provides food, shelter, and nesting sites for turtles and other wildlife.
- d. **Limit Pesticide Use:** Reduce using pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers in your yard, as these chemicals can contaminate water sources and harm turtles and their habitat. Opt for integrated pest management techniques.
- e. **Provide Safe Nesting Areas:** Create sandy or soft soil areas where turtles can dig nests and lay their eggs. Ensure these nesting sites are away from high-traffic areas and protected from potential disturbances.
- f. **Add Barrier Fencing:** Install turtle-friendly fencing around your yard to prevent turtles from wandering into dangerous areas such as roads or swimming pools. Ensure the fencing has a gradual slope or gaps to allow turtles to pass through safely.
- g. **Minimize Artificial Lighting:** Reduce artificial lighting at night, as it can disorient nesting females and hatchlings. Use motion-activated or turtle-friendly lighting fixtures to minimize disturbance to nocturnal wildlife.
- h. **Implement Wildlife-Friendly Practices:** Embrace wildlife-friendly gardening practices such as composting, mulching, and maintaining a diverse ecosystem. Encourage beneficial insects and other small creatures that contribute to a healthy ecosystem.
- i. **Practice Responsible Pet Ownership:** If you have pets, ensure they are supervised when outdoors to prevent them from harassing or harming turtles and other wildlife. Provide designated areas for pets to play and roam safely.
- j. **Educate Others:** Share your knowledge and passion for turtle-friendly backyard practices with friends, family, and neighbors. Together, we can create a network of turtle-friendly habitats that support local ecosystems and conserve precious wildlife.

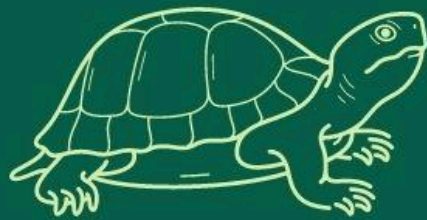
By implementing these tips, you can transform your backyard into a welcoming sanctuary for turtles and other native wildlife. Your efforts will not only benefit the environment but also provide endless opportunities for observing and appreciating the wonders of nature right in your own backyard.

***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:

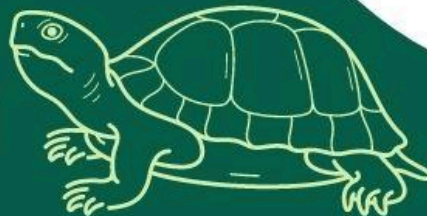


ONE

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.

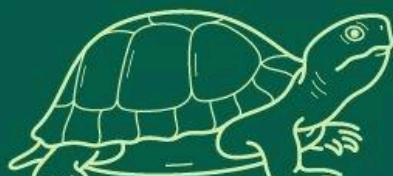
TWO

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.



****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

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** in the direction of travel. Don't ever move them to a different location.

photo by Patrick Randall

Species-specific fun facts:

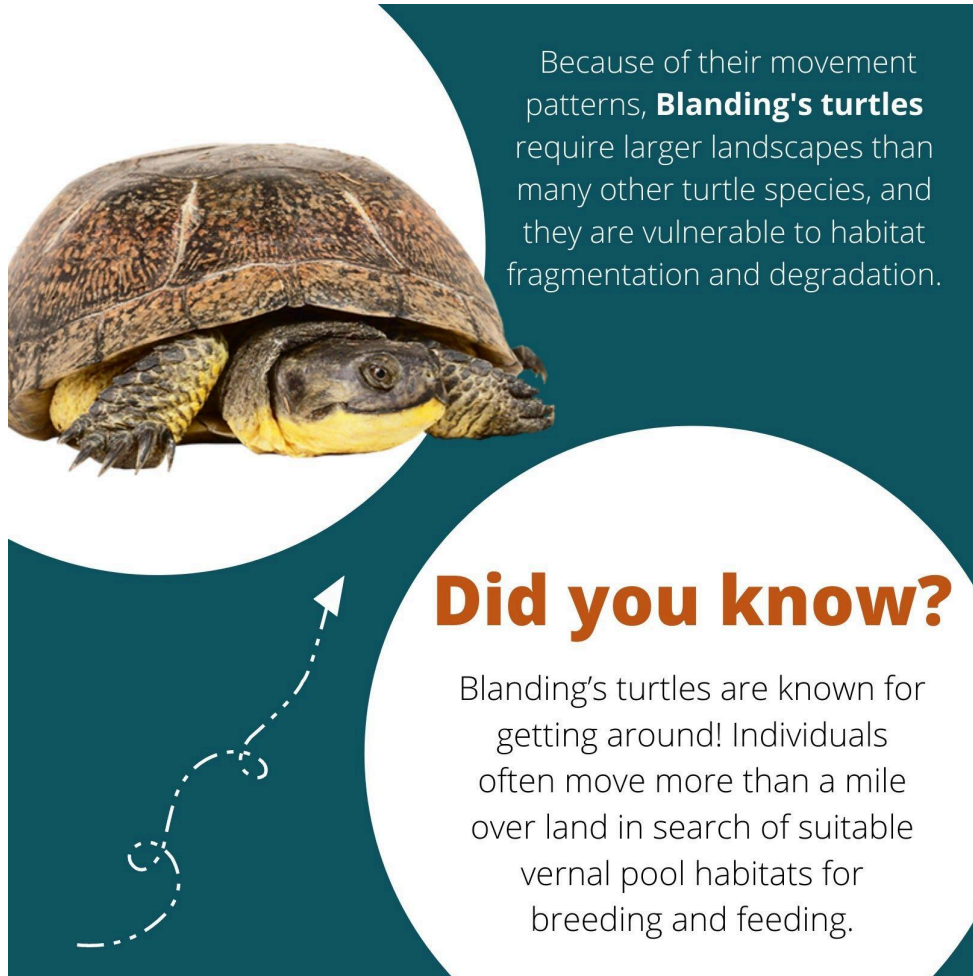
Blanding's turtle (use all together for Facebook, or adapt for Instagram**)

- **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!

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:**



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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 aggressive, including towards well meaning folks who try to help them safely cross the road. [Check out this video from the Toronto Zoo](#) on how to safely help snapping turtles cross the road:
- Did you know? The snapping turtle has been documented on more Department of Defense properties than any other turtle species! Learn about this ancient and cool turtle species with [this video here](#).

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.

****Example Instagram post:**



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Western pond turtle

- Western pond turtles cannot swallow above water; they can only ingest food when submerged underwater. Their diet includes everything from aquatic roots and plants to insect larvae and adults to fish, amphibians, and carrion.
- Scientists recently divided the western pond turtle complex into two distinct species: the northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) [including British Columbia, Canada; Washington; Oregon; Nevada; and northern California south along the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Central Valley, and the Coast Range down to Monterey and Kern Counties] and southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*) [including southern California from Monterey County south to Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego Counties into northern Baja California, Mexico].
- Compared to more than 20 turtle species on the Atlantic coast, western pond turtles have been the only species naturally found along all of the Pacific coast

states between Canada and Mexico since the dawn of the Pliocene epoch five million years ago. Its closest neighbor, the western painted turtle, only inhabits a portion of Oregon and Washington.

- In the mid to late 1800s and early 1900s, western pond turtles were sought after in California as an ingredient in turtle soups and stews. In 1895, at the height of the commercial terrapin fishery in California, about 63,000 western pond turtles were reported in the commercial markets. By some estimates, as many as 524,000 to a million turtles may have been actually harvested between 1863 and 1931.
- Although some western pond turtles appear drab and unremarkable, the specific name “marmorata” was so-named in recognition of the elaborate speckling and marbling that distinguishes many western pond turtles’ beautiful shells.

Leatherback sea turtle

- Leatherback sea turtles are Earth’s largest species of sea turtle - they can measure up to 6.5 ft (2 m) in length and weigh more than 2,000 lb (900 kg).
- Leatherbacks are one of the deepest diving vertebrates. They can dive to depths of 3,280 ft (1,000 m) or more. The only species known to dive deeper are the sperm whale and elephant seal.
- Leatherbacks are covered in smooth, rubbery skin rather than hard keratin plates typical of other marine and freshwater turtles.
- Through a mechanism scientists call *gigantothermy*, leatherbacks are able to maintain a core temperature warmer than the surrounding water because of their large body size, insulation, and “counter-current heat exchange” (in which blood from their inner bodies travels alongside blood returning from their cold limbs). Unlike other sea turtles, these adaptations allow them to migrate through and forage in colder climates without becoming cold-stunned.

****Example Instagram post:**



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