



2025

# ANNUAL REPORT

Collaborative to Combat the  
Illegal Trade in Turtles



**CCITT**

COLLABORATIVE TO COMBAT  
THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN TURTLES



AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION



**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.**



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The CCITT is a PARC  
National Task Team

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Cover photo: Wood turtle / Tyler DeVos



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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 the illegal collection and trade of turtles.

Visit our Website:

<https://parcplace.org/species/collaborative-to-combat-the-illegal-trade-in-turtles/>



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CCITT Strategic Coordinator:  
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Willa Chaves (Virginia Tech)

Dave Collins (TSA)

Elizabeth Hunter (Virginia Tech)

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Thomas Loring (USFWS)

# Defining the Road Ahead

Addressing a complex, global challenge like illegal turtle trade requires a strategic, long-term approach. In a major milestone for the organization, the CCITT was thrilled to officially release their 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. The document represents a major planning, workshopping, and writing effort that took several years to complete, with input from dozens of members and outside partners.

The document is organized around priority goals, objectives, and supporting actions that were determined to be most likely to reduce illegal collection and trade, as well as create a more sustainable and ethical environment around trade. The five overarching goals are as follows:

01

Build and maintain strategic partnerships to support the CCITT's mission to address the illegal turtle trade.



02

Understand how people affect and are affected by the turtle trade and apply evidence-based approaches to reduce illegal trade in an ethical and culturally sensitive manner.



03

Build capacity and secure dedicated resources to accommodate confiscation and repatriation or permanent placement of turtles.



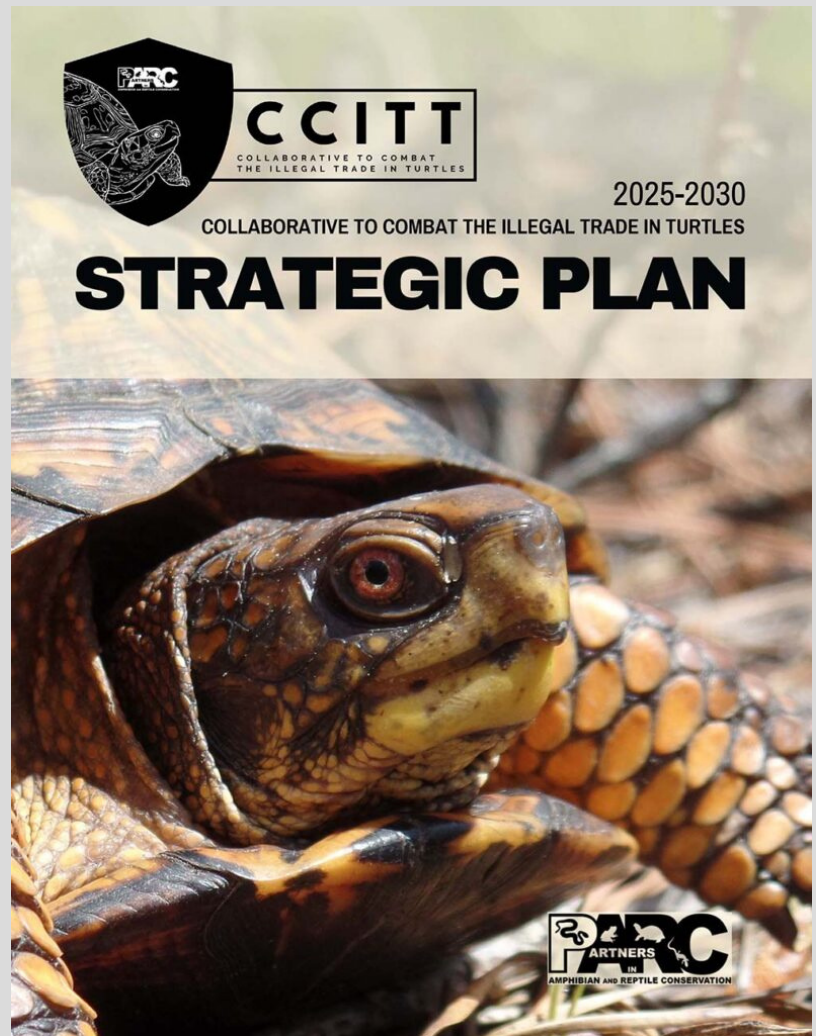
04

Develop a model legal framework and resources to effectively combat the illegal trade in turtles.



05

Strengthen support for effective enforcement of the illegal turtle trade through resource development, collaboration, and tailored training.



Above: The CCITT 2025-2030 Strategic Plan cover.

Right: View or download the plan in its entirety at the QR code link.

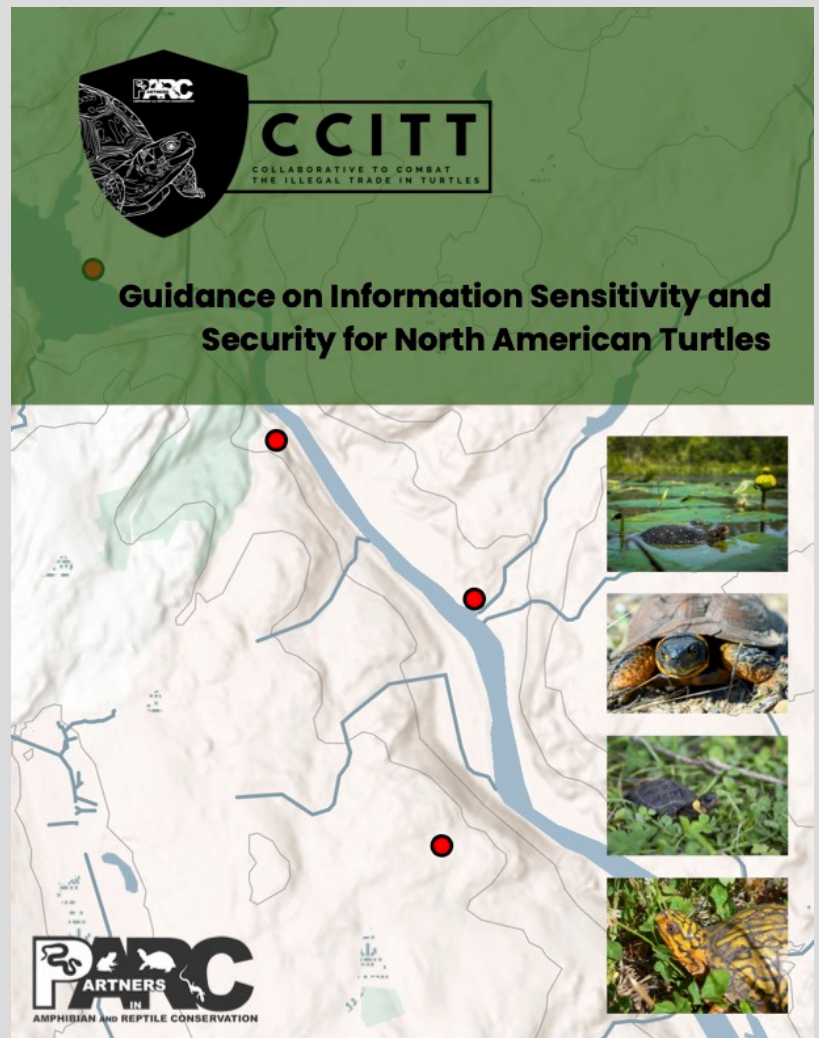


# Changing the Culture

The illegal collection and trade in turtles has, in part, been propelled by the availability of information on the internet, such as location records for individuals or populations, and potential prices for individuals in trade. In North America, those who traffic turtles misuse available information to carry out their illegal activities, and there is an increasing need for awareness about the sensitivity of information on turtles.

The availability of artificial intelligence (commonly known as AI) exacerbates the issue by increasing the speed at which information can be gathered from online platforms. Considering these risks, the community of enthusiasts, naturalists, land managers, regulators, researchers, and others who care about turtle conservation have an important role to play in protecting information about them.

In late 2025, led by the Research and Data Working Group, the CCITT published *Guidance on Information Sensitivity and Security for North American Turtles*. The document is intended to increase awareness about the sensitivity of turtle information and provide guidance on the safe handling of this information for North American species.



Above: The Guidance on Information Sensitivity and Security cover.

Right: View or download the document in its entirety at the QR code link.



# Rising to the Challenge



2026 CCITT LE Challenge Coin



One of 2025's most fun and exciting accomplishments was the launch of the CCITT Challenge Coin. The 2026 coin, pictured above, is the first in what will be an annual release. Designed by CCITT Strategic Coordinator, Brooke Talley, and the Law Enforcement Working Group, the 2026 CCITT Challenge Coin is cast in the shape of an eastern box turtle. The coin features the CCITT logo on the underside of the coin, along with a backdrop of the U.S. and Canadian flags overlain with a *thin green line*, representing support for conservation law enforcement. The coin is intended to recognize CCITT's law enforcement membership, a group that works every day to fight back against the illegal collection and trade of North America's native turtles.

Other initiatives that have remained central to CCITT's mission in 2025 include:

- 5th Annual State Roundtable: The annual roundtable offers an opportunity for states and provinces to share updates on non-sensitive cases, changes in laws or regulations, initiatives or projects focused on illegal turtle trade.
- 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 2025, monthly calls featured eight guest speakers.

# Staying on Message



Left: Mark Cagle (Lt. retired, North Carolina Wildlife) talks to the Pennsylvania Forest Rangers about the illegal turtle trade, January 2025. Photo by Mike Ravesi.

Communicating to advance its mission has been a winning formula for the CCITT since its founding. Through presentations, workshops, networking, and digital media, the CCITT continued to spread the CCITT mission in 2025. Connecting with the wildlife law enforcement community is one of the CCITT's highest priorities and in January of 2025, CCITT Co-chair Mike Ravesi and long-time CCITT champion Mark Cagle (Lt. retired, North Carolina Wildlife) traveled to Pennsylvania to spend a day with the Pennsylvania Forest Rangers (above) to speak to them about the issue of illegal turtle trade and to share tips on how to recognize reptile poachers.

In February of 2025, the CCITT hosted a webinar titled *Homeward Bound: Addressing Disease Risks for Repatriating Turtles* which featured case studies from South Carolina and New Jersey, alongside a panel of experts tackling disease challenges. And in another web-based effort to improve communication, the CCITT web pages were given a major update in 2025, giving them a fresh look and adding links to a number of new resources.



Photo by Kevin Oxenrider / WV DNR.

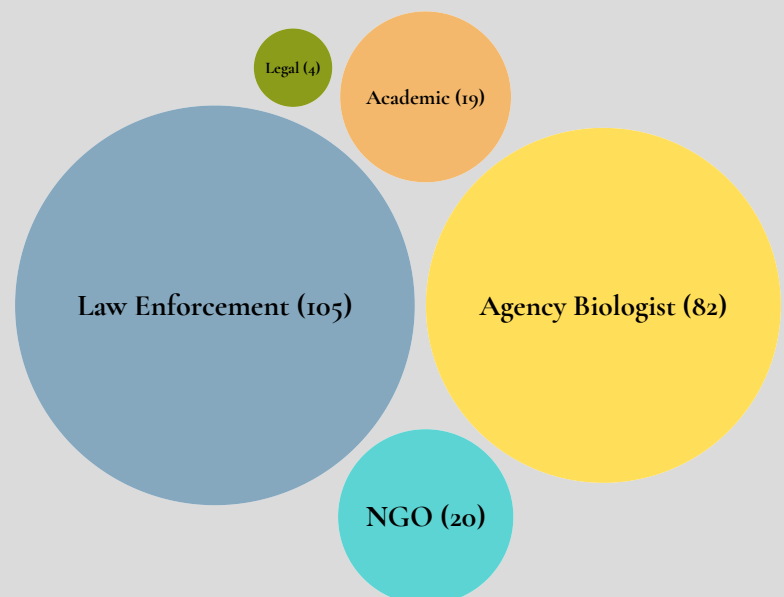
# Membership Growth and Leadership Changes

Photo by Stephen Badger / MD DNR



Membership continued to expand in 2025 to a total of approximately 230 members at year's end. The breakdown of membership by job category can be seen at right. Additionally, several individuals joined the Leadership Board and Steering Committee:

- Kevin Oxenrider, State Herpetologist, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources became a CCITT Co-chair in May of 2025.
- Willandia Chaves, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Wildlife Conservation, Virginia Tech University became a Co-chair of the Human Dimensions and Communications Working Group in August of 2025.



# Slow and Steady Progress

Photo by Andrew DuBois / CC



In what was a busy and productive year for the CCITT, a number of additional initiatives and projects got under way in 2025. The following items represent some of the progress made in the working group settings.

- Led by Elizabeth Hunter, the Research and Data Working Group held a Structured Decision Making workshop to identify the priority tasks for a CCITT data specialist contract position. The top two priorities were developing a database of confiscated turtles being held in facilities, and creating a database of turtle sales via web-scraping of online sources.
- The Human Dimensions and Communications Working Group finalized a concise two-page communication guide for CCITT members that provides guidance on communicating with sensitivity, tips on working with the media, and overarching key messages. The document is available to all members.
- The Research and Data Working Group, led by member Max Jones, conducted an analysis of LEMIS turtle import data collected between 2000-2022 to describe the species being imported into the U.S., their origins, and trends over time. The paper is currently under review at Biological Conservation.