

Bog Turtles in Pennsylvania

Stewardship Opportunities for Private Landowners



Photos: George C. Gress

What is a Bog Turtle?

The bog turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) is a small freshwater turtle with a light-brown to black shell, and large reddish-orange or yellow blotches on each side of its head. The turtle lives in spring-fed wetlands with clear, slow-moving water, soft mud, and grasses and sedges.

Status of the Bog Turtle in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission listed the bog turtle as a state endangered species in 1974. In 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the bog turtle as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.



Photo: George C. Gress

Why Do Bog Turtles Need Protection?

Bog Turtles face many threats including:

- Habitat succession (from meadow-like wetlands to forested wetlands)
- Invasive exotic plants
- Destruction, degradation and fragmentation of wetland habitat resulting from residential and commercial development, roads, and agriculture
- Illegal collection for the pet trade
- Nest predation by small mammals



Bog Turtle hatchling with egg.
Photo: George C. Gress

Photo: Tracy J. Coleman

What Assistance May Be Available To Landowners?

- **Technical Assistance** for habitat conservation and management is available through various agencies and conservation organizations, including:
 - Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - The Nature Conservancy

A professional biologist can assess the bog turtle habitat on your property and work with you to develop a conservation plan or habitat restoration plan that benefits bog turtles (see contact information).

- **Habitat Management Assistance** may also be available to implement a habitat management plan on your property to benefit bog turtles, contingent upon the availability of funding.
- **Habitat Protection** funds for long-term protection, such as conservation easements, may be available for *your* land. Contact a resource professional soon.

For more information:

Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan Wetland Goals (Wetlands Component, Section 14) at: www.fish.state.pa.us/promo/grants/swg/OOswg.htm

This brochure supported by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Landowner Incentive Program funds administered by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Grant I-3-T-1.

Many Animals Use Bog Turtle Habitat

The wetlands that bog turtles inhabit also support a variety of other wildlife including:

- Turtles (wood turtle, box turtle, spotted turtle)
- Frogs (leopard frog, wood frog, green frog)
- Snakes
- Newts & salamanders
- Wetland birds, deer, bear

Best Management Practices to Conserve Bog Turtles

Work with a professional biologist to design and carry out a habitat conservation and management plan to benefit bog turtles.



POACHERS: Be aware of, and report, any signs of poaching activities to the PA Fish and Boat Commission. 717.705.7861.

In and near bog turtle wetlands:

- *Avoid* development activities (e.g., roads, buildings)
- *Avoid* use of fertilizers, herbicides & pesticides
- *Avoid* earth disturbance (e.g., plowing, digging)
- *Avoid* use of vehicles, including all-terrain vehicles
- *Avoid* dumping waste materials (e.g., tires, oil, lumber)
- *Avoid* mowing bog turtle wetlands unless you have consulted a professional biologist who can design a mowing plan that will avoid killing bog turtles and destroying nests

What Can You Do?

Private landowners can play a vital role in conserving bog turtles and their habitat. If you have bog turtles and/or their habitat on your property, please contact a resource professional *soon*.

For Technical or Habitat Management Assistance:

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
Endangered Species Coordinator
Phone: 814.359.5237

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Bog Turtle Recovery Coordinator
315 S. Allen St., Suite 322,
State College, PA 16801
Phone: 814-234-4090

The Nature Conservancy
2101 North Front Street, Building #1, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17110
Phone: 717.232.6001



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