



Media Release

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Attached photograph by Steve Krichbaum

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Wood Turtle Makes Top 10 List of Species in Need of Protection

New report highlights nation's species in danger of extinction

Charlottesville, VA – The wood turtle is one of the most in-need species for protection under the Endangered Species Act, according to a report released today by the Endangered Species Coalition. The report, *Without a Net: Top Ten Wildlife, Fish and Plants in Need of Endangered Species Act Protection*, demonstrates the critical need to reinvigorate the process under the Endangered Species Act used to protect our nation's species on the brink of extinction.

In the Southeast, the wood turtle is found only in Virginia, usually in or near flowing, clear streams, in adjacent hardwood forests and old fields with favorite summer foods such as strawberries and raspberries. They eat mushrooms, leaves and many kinds of animals, including earthworms, grubs, snails, tadpoles and dead fish. They rarely venture far from flowing water but have strong homing instincts and will always try to return to their original location if they are displaced. Wood Turtles will climb into bushes to eat berries or stomp on the ground to draw earthworms to the surface to eat. The Wood Turtle's range is Northern Virginia and West Virginia up through the Northeast and upper Midwest. However, the intense development of its native range has fragmented populations and shrunken available habitat which affects both the current population and limits their ability to repopulate areas. In addition, global warming threatens to alter their aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

"Wood Turtles face accumulating assault that can prevent many populations from persisting. The Turtles may not reproduce enough or survive long enough to make up for collection, predation, or road kill as well as losses from habitat alteration or development. Without strong decisive action, America will continue to lose its Wood Turtle" said Steve Krichbaum, Conservationist and Naturalist living in Virginia.

"It is critical that we move quickly to protect the endangered population of wood turtles here in Virginia," said David Hannah, Conservation Director of Wild Virginia. "We continue to urge the U.S. Forest Service to establish a Special Biological Area in the George Washington National Forest specifically to protect our little friends."

"The Endangered Species Act is our nation's safety net for the wildlife, fish and plants at risk of disappearing forever," said Tara Thornton, Northeast Representative of the Endangered Species Coalition. "Sadly, too many species are being left without the Act's protections. Some of these species are jeopardized by the bad behavior of political appointees, while some face the impacts of global warming and other threats. All share in the common need for the nation to renew our commitment to protecting imperiled species."

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The wildlife, fish and plants considered for the report were nominated by conservation and environmental organizations from around the country. A panel of scientists and advocates selected the final ten featured, as well as three honorable mentions. In addition to the Wood Turtle, the highlighted species include the Pacific Walrus, Wolverine, Gunnison Sage-grouse, Fluvial Arctic Grayling, Island Marble Butterfly, Southern Rockies Boreal Toad, Mason's Skypilot, the Great White Shark, the Red Knot, the Sand Dune Lizard, Grahams Penstemon, and the western population of the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl.

"All of the species nominated for this report – and hundreds of others – need our help to avoid extinction, even though they are not yet on the Endangered Species List," stated Thornton. "We need to renew our commitment to protecting all wildlife, fish and plants in need and we look forward to working with the new congress and administration to restore how our nation implements the Endangered Species Act."

Wild Virginia is a local non-profit that works to ensure the biological integrity of Virginia's National Forests and believes that their highest benefit is to provide a source and a legacy of clean drinking water, clean air, wilderness, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. For more information on Wild Virginia, contact David Hannah at 434-971-1553 or Ernie Reed at 434-971-1647 or visit the Wild Virginia website at www.wildvirginia.org.

The full report and information on each species is available online at www.StopExtinction.org.

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