

## FOCUS ON CONSERVATION

# 2011 Year of the Turtle

Turtles are disappearing from the planet faster than any other group of animals. Today, nearly 50% of turtle species are identified as threatened with extinction. However, it's not too late. The United States has more endemic turtle species than anywhere on Earth and is a true turtle biodiversity hotspot. Careful stewardship can preserve the rare species and keep common species common.

The bad news is that humans cause the greatest harm to turtle populations — but the good news is that we have the power to make positive changes toward turtle survival. The greatest threats to turtle populations include: (1) Habitat loss and degradation; (2) over-harvesting of wild turtles for food, traditional medicines, and pets; (3) mortality from roads, agricultural machinery, fishing by-catch, and predators (many of which are non-native); (4) exotic invasive species and diseases; (5) loss of genetically unique populations due to hybridization (often as a consequence of turtles released into areas where they do not occur naturally); and (5) climate change.

Throughout the year, turtle conservation groups in partnership with Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) will be raising aware-

ness of the issues surrounding turtles through press releases, newsletters, photo contests, and related events. Citizens, natural resource managers, scientists, and the pet, petfood, and related industries can work together to address issues and to help ensure the long-term survival of turtle species and populations.

Bookmark [www.yearoftheturtle.org](http://www.yearoftheturtle.org) and check it frequently for more information on how you can get involved! The website includes links to 2011 State of the Turtle and USA Turtle Mapping Project, information on submitting a photograph for the Year-of-the-Turtle photo contest, and the 2011 Year of the Turtle video. You can also sign up for monthly newsletters that contain: (1) A downloadable turtle photo calendar for each month (if you enter the photo contest, your photo could be in the calendar!); (2) information about turtle conservation efforts and groups, and how you can help; (3) interviews with turtle experts, and answers to submitted questions; (4) information on how you can help spread the word about turtles; (5) educational materials; (6) turtle art, poetry, and cultural information; and much more! Contact [yearoftheturtle2011@gmail.com](mailto:yearoftheturtle2011@gmail.com) with any questions, or to be a partner in Year of the Turtle.



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The Spotted Turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) is endemic to the eastern United States. It is currently listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.