

TURTLES OF THE GREAT SWAMP



By John Foley

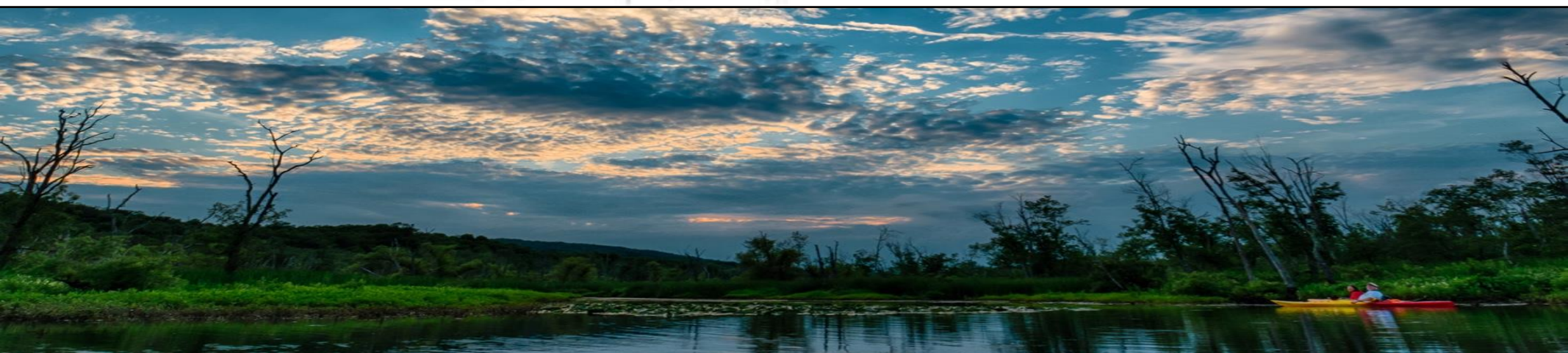


Great Hollow
Nature Preserve & Ecological Research Center



The Great Swamp

- Second largest wetland in NY
- Putnam & Dutchess Counties
- 6,000 acres of "swamp land"
- 63,000 acre watershed



*** Turtle Identifications**

*** Preferred Habitat Selection**

*** Reasons for Decline**

*** Turtle Conservation**



Highly Aquatic Species



Snapping Turtle

Chelydra serpentina

Description:

- long serpentine neck, massive head, muscular legs, and a dinosaur like tail

Habitat Requirements:

- vegetated ponds, lake edges, ponds, rivers, streams, and brackish water

Interesting Fact:

Snapping turtles defense strategy is to “snap” instead of withdrawing into shell





Average Length: 8-12" carapace length

Average Weight: 15-30lbs

Behaviour: mainly nocturnal

Nesting Ecology:

-sexual maturity depends on size

-20 to 40 eggs





● Approximate Natural and Introduced Range of *Chelydra serpentina* - Snapping Turtle



Eastern Painted Turtle

Chrysemys Picta

Description:

- carapace size is 4" to 10" with bright orange plastron with yellow striped neck and red striped body
- male turtle will have longer claws than the female.

Habitat Requirements:

-shallow waters with slow-moving currents, such as creeks, marshes, ponds, and the shores of lakes

Interesting Fact:

Males initiate courtship by stroking the females face



PAINTED TURTLES
Chrysemys picta





Common Musk Turtle

Sternotherus odoratus

Description

- Highly domed shell usually covered in algae. Shell Color can vary but overall dark
- Triangular shaped head with two distinct yellow streaks from nose to neck

Habitat Requirements

- Ponds & slow moving streams with heavy vegetation.

Intersting Fact:

Musk turtles can breath through their tongue!





Sternotherus odoratus



- Native HUCs
- HUC 8 Level Record
- HUC 6 Level Record
- Non-specific State Record

Map created on 11/8/2011. United States Geological Survey







Semi-Terrestrial Species



Spotted Turtle

clemmys guttata

Description:

- moderately domed black shell that can be up to 5" with yellow polka dots.
- females have a yellow chin, while males have a dark chin

Habitat Requirements:

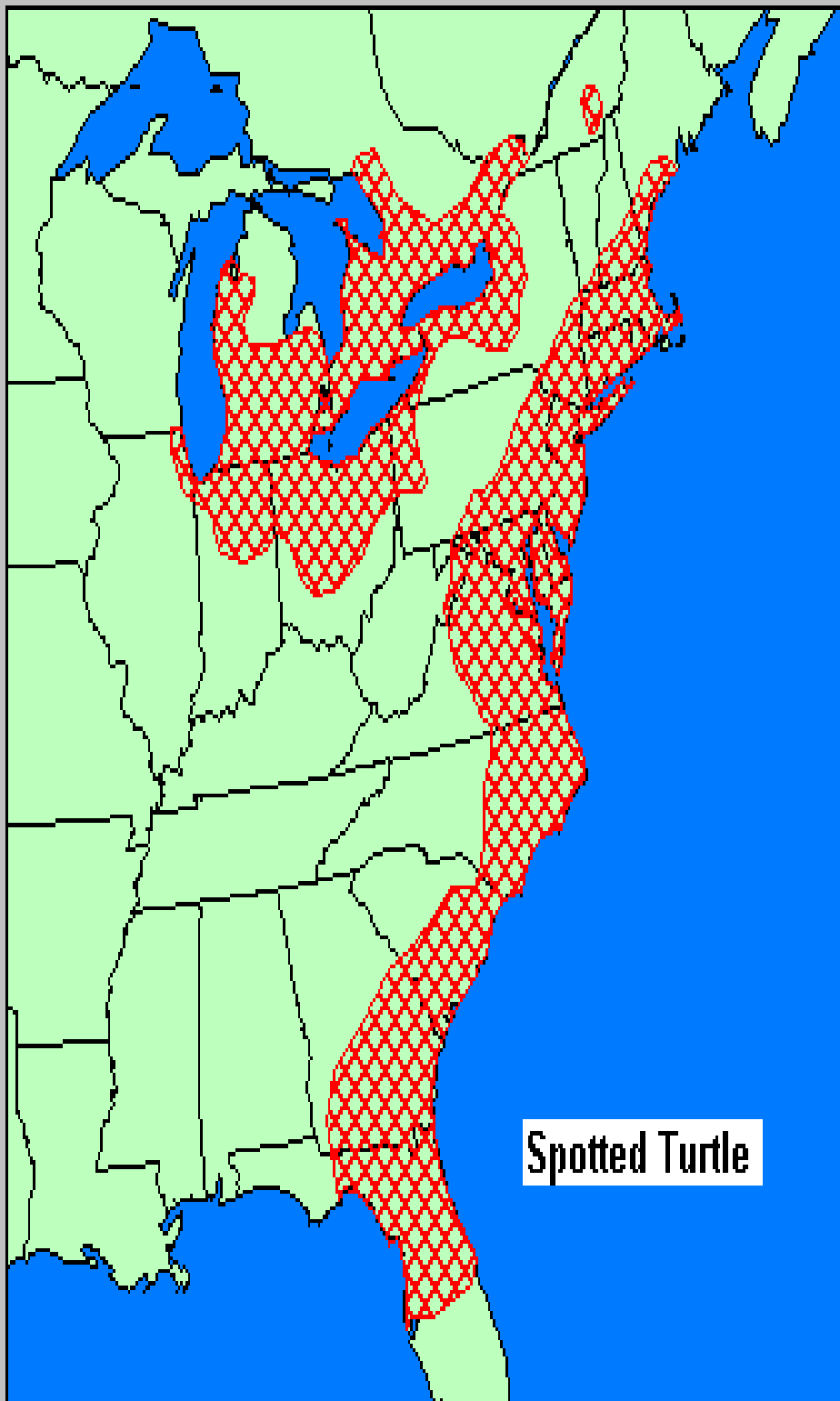
- shallow and slow moving waters with soft muddy soil, sedge tussocks, water lilies, sphagnum moss, and cattails.
- Vernal pool dependent
- very rare at elevations above 900ft.

Interesting Fact:

Spotted turtles add spots as they mature but lose them as they get later in age



CT SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN







Wood Turtle

Glyptemys insculpta

Description:

- shell has a "pyramidal pattern" of ridges and grooves.
- plastron is yellowish in color and has dark patches
- neck, body, and limbs are orange with a dark head

Habitat Requirements:

- slow moving streams containing a sandy bottom and heavily vegetated banks.
- riparian early successional habitat

Interesting Fact:

Wood turtles are known to be one of the most intelligent of all turtle species

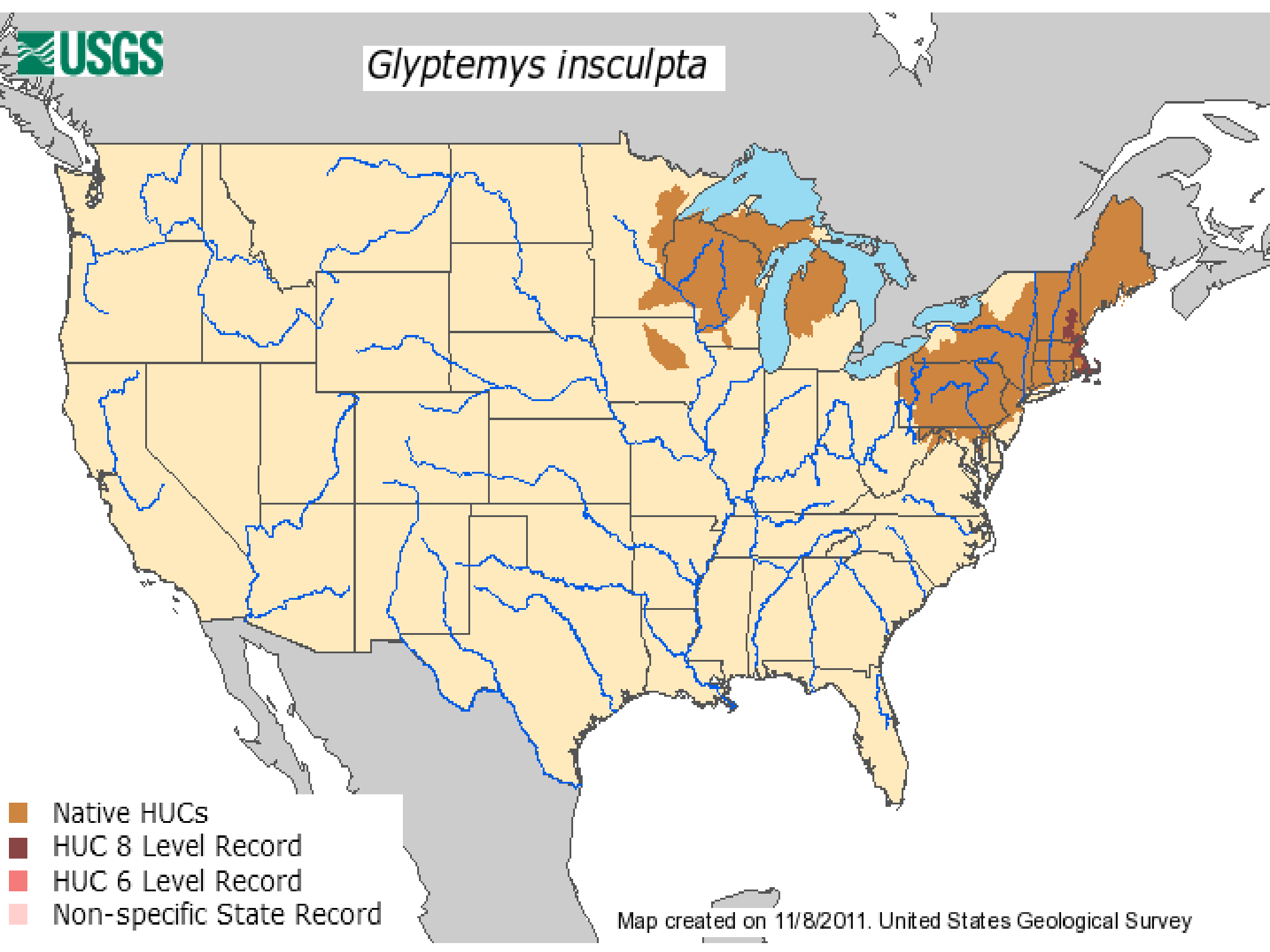


CT SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN





Glyptemys insculpta



- Native HUCs
- HUC 8 Level Record
- HUC 6 Level Record
- Non-specific State Record







Bog Turtle

Glyptemys muhlenbergii

Description:

- N.A. smallest turtle (3.5" to 4")
- domed shell with bright orange blotches on the neck behind the eyes

Habitat Requirements:

- Calcareous wetlands; wet meadows & marshes

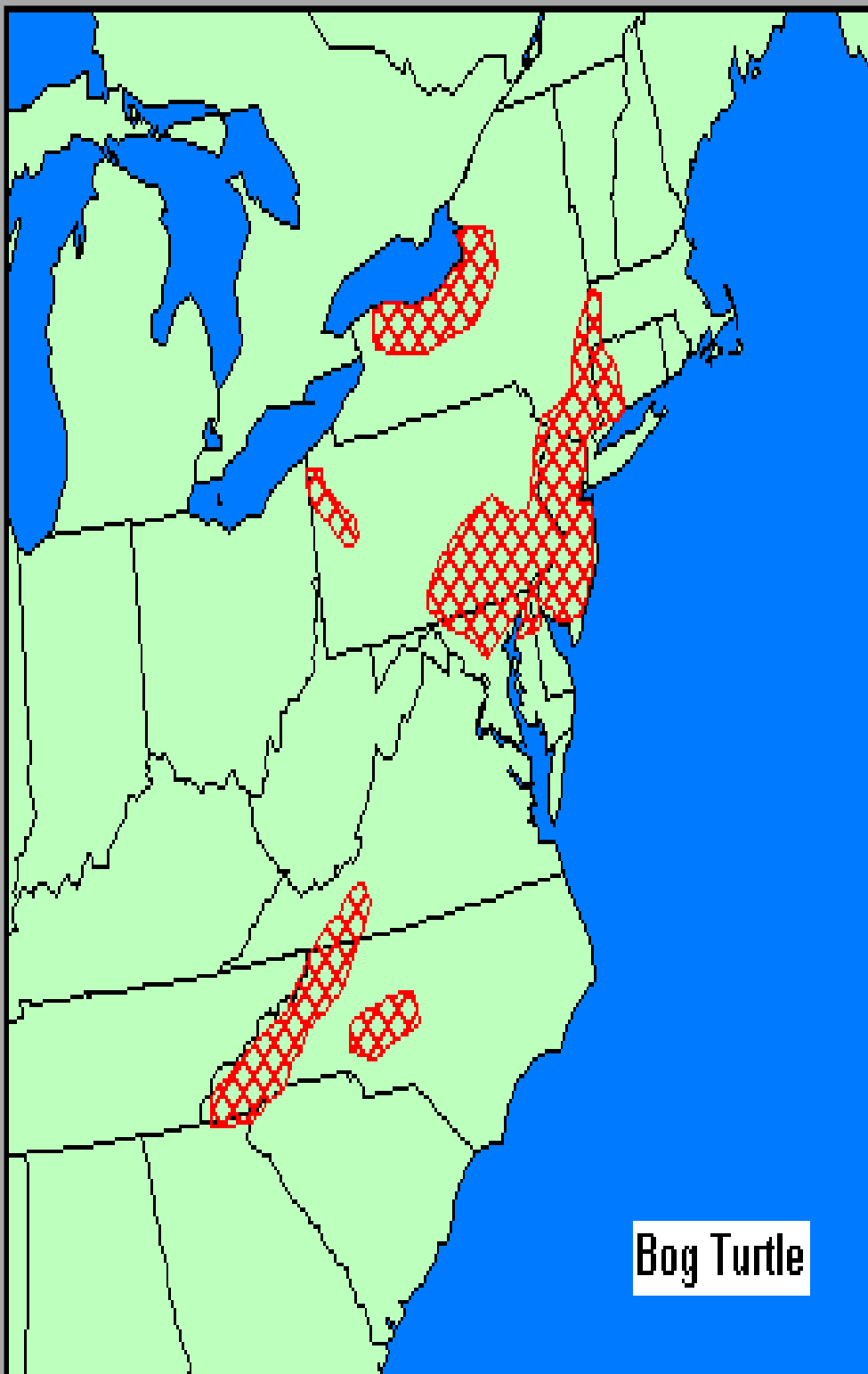
Interesting Fact:

If action is not taken now, Bog turtles will be the first reptile to extirpated from CT.



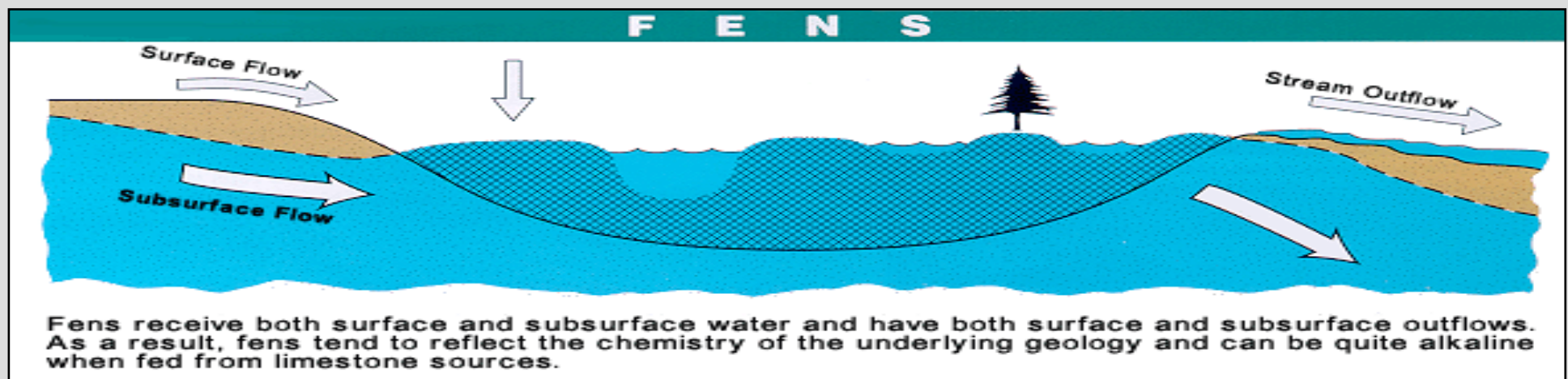
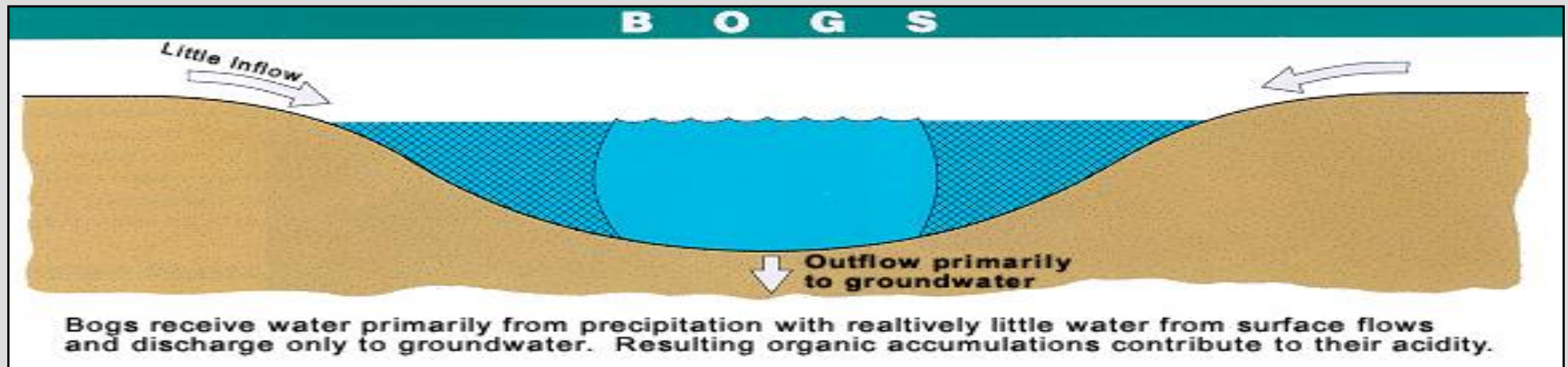
CT ENDANGERED SPECIES





Calcareous Fen: An area of upwelling of calcium-rich ground water that often harbors unique or rare vegetation

* Fens are alkaline rather than acidic







Eastern Box Turtle

Terrapene carolina

Description:

- very high domed shell, up to 6" in length.
- "hinge" on plastron
- Males have reddish eyes while females are brown

Habitat Requirements:

- Deciduous forests, wetland edges, early successional habitat

Interesting Fact:

Box turtles can live their entire life within the same 250 yards



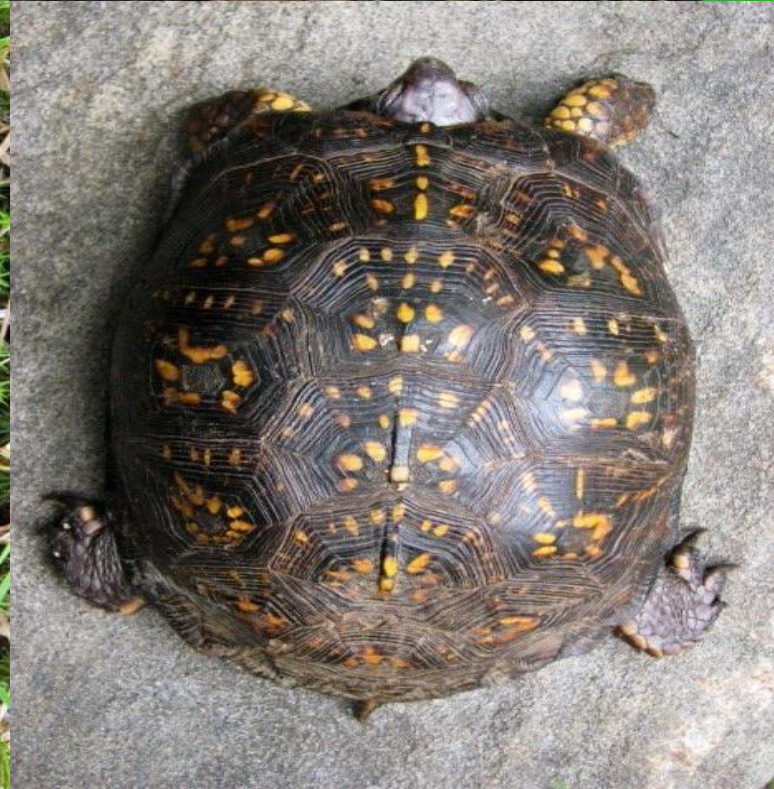
CT SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN



Sexually Dimorphic

Male

Female











Primary Threats For Turtles

Turtles are currently the most endangered vertebrate animal group, with more than 50% of the world's species threatened with extinction. Twelve species are native to Connecticut; some, such as the wood, bog, spotted, and box turtles are in decline.

Habitat Loss

Subsidized Predators

Illegal Collection



...and yes, Global Warming

WHAT IS HABITAT LOSS

HABITAT DESTRUCTION



HABITAT DEGRADATION



HABITAT FRAGMENTATION







Sub Sidized Predators

*Species that can survive and in some cases, expand in part due to humans

- Raccoons, fox, skunks, chipmunks, opossums
 - Birds: herons, crows, hawks
 - Feral dogs & cats
 - Bears?





**Poaching
Over-harvesting
Global warming**

Turtle Conservation



BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST



GET INVOLVED!!

REPORT OBSERVATIONS

PROTECT NESTS

INTEREST YOUTH





Developing Youth Interest in Nature & Conservation!

- *Children at age 8 can identify more Pokemon characters than wildlife species (Balmfold, Clegg, and Taylor, 2002)
- *Youth between 8 & 18 spend on average 6.5 hours a day on media devices (Kaiser Family Association, 2005 and 2006)
- *Obesity
- *More hunting & fishing games are sold than actual licenses





Thank You!! Questions?

Remember- Leave a wild turtle wild & never release a pet turtle into the wild!