

WESTERN POND TURTLE



**be a BUDDY**

**NOT A BULLY**

## **How to help:**

- ✔ **Keep water clean for turtles. . . and for you!**
- ✔ **Don't release pets, like turtles and frogs, into the wild.**
- ✔ **Buddy up, because together we can save the Western Pond Turtle!**

**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**

**SAFE**  
SAVING ANIMALS  
FROM EXTINCTION

## **Keep water clean for turtles... and for you!**

Our native western pond turtles need two types of habitat: wet and dry. They spend much of their time feeding, breeding, and basking in fresh-water ponds, lakes, streams, and wetlands. Like all aquatic and amphibious animals, they need that water to be clean—free of pollutants and litter.

Part of the year, western pond turtles need safe space in dry, upland habitat—as much as 300 feet from the water—where they can nest and lay their eggs. In a healthy environment, they can live up to 70 years!

Large, invasive activities like water diversion, dams, and draining wetlands for development destroy western pond turtle habitat. But smaller actions can also hurt western pond turtles. You can help turtles by protecting their living spaces (habitat) from unleashed pets, litter, pollution, invasive plants, and vandalism.

Although they may seem harmless, plants can also hurt western pond turtles. If you know someone is thinking of dumping their aquarium plants in a local creek or lake, please tell them that would be bad for native wildlife, especially western pond turtles. (That's why it's illegal.) Encourage them to put unwanted plants in their landscape waste or garbage bin.

## **Don't release pets, like turtles and frogs, into the wild**

Exotic pets that are not native can create big problems for the western pond turtle when they are released onto local waterways. This is especially true when it comes to the red eared slider, a common pet turtle species that is larger and more aggressive than the western pond turtle.

Released pets become invasive species that...

- Spread disease and parasites.
- Prey on eggs and hatchlings.
- Outcompete native western pond turtles for resources such as food and nesting sites.

Be a responsible pet owner by doing research on the needs, space required, and lifespan of your potential pet.

When you bring an animal into your home as a pet, you are making a commitment to care for that animal its entire life. You are responsible for finding a new home for it if you can no longer provide proper care. Releasing a pet into the wild is NEVER the right choice and is illegal.

As a protected species, western pond turtles may not be kept as pets. Turtles require very specialized care and can easily become ill when taken from the wild. Removing even one individual also removes all the potential offspring that turtle may have had. So if you see a turtle in the wild, remember to respect its space and let it remain wild! It is the law.

## **Buddy Up, Because Together We Can Save the Western Pond Turtle**

Species have been threatened by similar issues in the past, and people have saved them, by working together! For example, American alligators were once on the verge of extinction and the bayou started to change rapidly. The government, private citizens, and businesses partnered together and the alligator has since been removed from the Endangered Species List! It was hard work, but people banded together, raised their voices, and took action. That's what these turtles need from us today.

Zoos, aquariums, universities, nonprofits, national parks, and the government are already working together to protect and save the western pond turtle.

Wild turtle eggs and hatchlings are collected for a "head start program," where they are raised at a zoo or aquarium until they are big and strong enough to fend off invasive species and compete for food, then released back into their natural habitat.

National, state, and local parks are working with volunteers of all ages to restore habitats for these turtles by removing invasive plants and animals, establishing protected spaces, and planting native plants.

There are lots of ways you, your class, your family, and your community can help out! Volunteer at a restoration event, donate to conservation projects, start a water conservation club at school, or most importantly, you can **SPREAD THE WORD!** We can save the western pond turtle, but we need your help!

### **For more information go to:**

Oregon Native Turtle Working Group <https://www.oregonturtles.com/index.html>

Oregon Zoo <https://www.oregonzoo.org/conservation/conserving-extinct-species/pacific-northwest-western-pond-turtles>

Woodland Park Zoo <https://www.zoo.org/turtles>

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/western\\_pond\\_turtle/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/western_pond_turtle/)

California Department of Fish and Wildlife <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Drought/Projects/Western-Pond-Turtle>

San Francisco Zoo <http://www.sfzoo.org/conservation/western-pond-turtle-conservation-program.html>