

ASSEMBLY, No. 1530

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 218th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2018 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman ANDREW ZWICKER

District 16 (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Designates Bog Turtle as State Reptile.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



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1 AN ACT designating the Bog Turtle as the New Jersey State Reptile,
2 and supplementing chapter 9A of Title 52 of the Revised
3 Statutes.
4
5 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle is a small turtle with a distinct orange
6 patch on either side of its head and a brown to black shell; and
7 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle is one of the smallest turtles in the world
8 and one of the rarest in North America; and
9 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle can be found in 12 New Jersey counties
10 and formerly populated all but three of New Jersey's counties; and
11 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle inhabits shallow spring-fed fens, bogs,
12 swamps, marshy meadows, and wet pastures, where it spends
13 most of its time submerged in mud; and
14 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle consumes a varied diet including insects,
15 snails, worms, seeds, and carrion; and
16 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle depends on a natural habitat that has a
17 diverse array of open fields and shrubbery for foraging, nesting,
18 basking, and hibernating; and
19 WHEREAS, The Bog Turtle generally hibernates from mid-
20 September through mid-April, and is easiest to find in mid-April
21 through June when it suns itself on matted vegetation; and
22 WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey listed the Bog Turtle as an
23 endangered species in 1974 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
24 listed the Bog Turtle as a threatened species in 1997; and
25 WHEREAS, The New Jersey field office of the U.S. Fish and
26 Wildlife Service partners with environmental community groups
27 and private landowners to maintain and expand the Bog Turtle's
28 habitat; and
29 WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey's Endangered and Nongame
30 Species Program through the Department of Environmental
31 Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife also works with private
32 landowners and environmental organizations to identify Bog Turtle
33 habitats, manage land where Bog Turtles are found, and educate
34 landowners about federal cost-sharing programs which help finance
35 preservation efforts; and
36 WHEREAS, New Jersey's history of agriculture has benefitted the Bog
37 Turtle as grazing animals help maintain the open-canopy
38 herbaceous wetlands, which Bog Turtles prefer, by controlling
39 woody shrubs and invasive species, and current preservation efforts
40 involve allowing farm animals to graze in Bog Turtle habitats; and
41 WHEREAS, A majority of states across the country have designated an
42 official state reptile to accompany their state symbols, but New
43 Jersey has not done so; and
44 WHEREAS, Designating the Bog Turtle as the State Reptile will
45 increase the public profile of the Bog Turtle, and encourage the
46 conservation of the species and its habitat; and

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1 **WHEREAS**, Due to the uniqueness of the Bog Turtle, it is appropriate
2 and fitting that the Bog Turtle be granted special recognition, and
3 the Bog Turtle is a fitting and proper addition to New Jersey's other
4 State Symbols; and

5 **WHEREAS**, By designating the Bog Turtle as the State Reptile, the
6 State government recognizes the importance of the Bog Turtle and
7 the unique ecosystems in this State that can support such a rare
8 creature; now, therefore,

9
10 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
11 *of New Jersey:*

12
13 1. The Bog Turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) is designated as
14 the New Jersey State Reptile.

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16 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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19 STATEMENT

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21 This bill designates the Bog Turtle as the official State Reptile of
22 New Jersey. This small, black and brown turtle with bright
23 markings on its head lives in 12 of New Jersey's counties and
24 formerly could be found in all but three counties. The Bog Turtle is
25 the smallest and one of the rarest turtles in North America, and is
26 thus an important and unique feature of New Jersey's ecosystem
27 that should be recognized and preserved. The U.S. Department of
28 Fish and Wildlife and the New Jersey Department of Environmental
29 Protection both recognize the importance of the Bog Turtle and
30 partner with private landowners to preserve its habitats. In some
31 instances, land owners can even use existing livestock to help
32 manage Bog Turtle sites, as grazing animals can remove invasive
33 species and eradicate plants that encroach upon the Bog Turtle's
34 preferred environment. A majority of other states have designated a
35 state reptile, and promoting the Bog Turtle will encourage
36 awareness of this creature and the preservation of its natural habitat.