

**SENATE, No. 1925**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**218th LEGISLATURE**

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 22, 2018

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator CHRISTOPHER "KIP" BATEMAN**

**District 16 (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Designates Bog Turtle as State Reptile.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



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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
- 47 **WHEREAS**, Due to the uniqueness of the Bog Turtle, it is appropriate  
48 and fitting that the Bog Turtle be granted special recognition, and

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1 the Bog Turtle is a fitting and proper addition to New Jersey's other  
2 State Symbols; and

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

7

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

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

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14 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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