



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Laurie Osher, PhD

13 Mayo Street
Orono, ME 04473
Phone: (207) 944-6743
Laurie.Osher@legislature.maine.gov

February 3, 2025

Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher presenting

LD 73, An Act to Designate the Wood Turtle as the Official State Reptile

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Good afternoon, Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Salisbury and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. I am Laurie Osher, and I represent House District 25 in Orono. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 73, An Act to Designate the Wood Turtle as the Official State Reptile**.

As I shared in my previous testimony, I introduced this bill and its companion, LD 73, after a critter-loving constituent posted the question, “Why doesn’t Maine have a State Amphibian?” It was a good question, so I consulted my friend and former colleague Dr. Aram Calhoun, University of Maine professor emerita of wetland ecology. She consulted with her two co-editors of the book *Maine Amphibians and Reptiles* and suggested I sponsor legislation to create both a state amphibian: The Spring Peeper, and a state reptile: the wood turtle.

Unlike the spring peeper, the wood turtle is a species of special concern. While it does not yet meet the criteria to be listed as endangered or threatened, it is vulnerable and could easily become endangered if we do not act with care. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

“The wood turtle once ranged widely across eastern landscapes characterized by meandering cobble-bottom streams and their surrounding fields and forests. Neither strictly aquatic nor terrestrial – it lives both on land and in water – the wood turtle is vulnerable to loss of both types of habitat. In addition to habitat loss and fragmentation, wood turtles face threats from agricultural machinery, invasive plants in nesting habitat, road-crossing mortality, degraded water quality, disease, and illegal collection for the black-market pet trade.”

I believe our chosen symbols are important. They reflect our values and our shared identity. Naming a state amphibian and a state reptile, in particular, highlights the natural wonders that are so central to our state's character and reminds us of the importance of protecting what makes Maine so special.

To me, the wood turtle is an especially poignant choice, representing the intricate, fragile ecosystems we enjoy and are stewards of here in Maine.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.