



Committee on State and Local Government  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

February 3, 2025

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

Dear Chair Baldacci, Chair Salisbury, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee:

My name is Ania Wright and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation nonprofit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 73, *An Act to Designate the Wood Turtle as the Official State Reptile*.

It is with great enthusiasm that Maine Audubon supports the designation of the Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*) as the official state reptile. Designating the Wood Turtle as the state reptile is a great opportunity for further public education of issues common with the species, which is at risk from the pet trade industry, road casualties, and habitat fragmentation. Furthermore, as we are the most forested state in the nation, the Wood Turtle is a fitting reptilian ambassador for the Pine Tree State.

The Wood Turtle is a species of special concern in Maine and an International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List Endangered Species. A species of special concern is any species of fish or wildlife that does not meet the criteria of an endangered or threatened species but is particularly vulnerable, and could easily become, an endangered, threatened, or extirpated species in Maine due to restricted distribution, low or declining numbers, specialized habitat needs or limits, or other factors.

The Wood Turtle is widespread across the state of Maine, unlike in our neighboring states, and found in aquatic, open field, and forest habitats. They use upland and forested areas in the late spring and into summer, can be found in slow moving rivers and lakes in warmer months, and during the winter hibernate underwater in slow-moving areas such as ponds, sheltered areas of rivers, or under logs and debris.

Maine Audubon has been instrumental in helping protect this long-lived but slow-to-reproduce species by reducing mortality from roadkill through various community science projects, and by facilitating movement along streams by replacing poorly functioning culverts with culverts that allow both aquatic and terrestrial passage of turtles and other animals. We also educate youth and adults about the importance of conserving turtles and their habitats through live animal presentations, interactive games, and other activities.

**It is with great enthusiasm that we encourage the committee to support the designation of the Wood Turtle as the Maine state reptile.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright  
Policy Advocate



*Wood Turtle. Photo by Jessica Piispanen, USFWS*



*Wood Turtle crossing logging road in Aroostook County. Photo by Doug Hitchcox, Maine Audubon*