



**NEW HAMPSHIRE
TURTLE RESCUE**

TURTLE TIDINGS

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

NOTTINGHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE



FIGURE 1: (LEFT) AN EASTERN MUSK TURTLE FOUND IN A WINDOW WELL AND RELEASED UNHARMED. (RIGHT) AN EGG LAID BY A BLANDING'S TURTLE PATIENT, INCUBATED AND CLOSE TO HATCHING.

PREFACE

In 2025, New Hampshire Turtle Rescue celebrated its fourth year caring for and advocating on behalf of New Hampshire's wild turtles. It was, by far, NHTR's most challenging but successful year in many regards. We admitted as many patients in one season as we have the previous three years combined and dealt with the effects of the driest summer on record in New Hampshire. The drought of 2025 saw wetlands and ephemeral water bodies reduce and disappear to such an extent that many turtles were forced to find other suitable habitat, which often meant imperiling themselves by having to cross roads, yards, and other obstacles while searching for adequate conditions.

These conditions also complicated our patient releases, especially towards the end of the season; we encountered quite a few instances where the appropriate release spot in a patient's home wetlands were extremely difficult to get to, or in some cases completely inaccessible, requiring a couple of patients to remain with us for the winter and be released next Spring when the situation has hopefully improved.

Despite these difficulties, we were able to return more patients back home, we successfully incubated and hatched out more babies, we gave more educational turtle talks, expanded our volunteer network, had presence at more community events, and raised more money for New Hampshire's wild turtles than any other year — and the comparison is not even close! We hope you enjoy reading about all of the positive things our team has accomplished this year to make the future a little brighter for our shelled friends.

WILD TURTLE REHABILITATION PROGRAM INTAKES

We **admitted 405 patients** from **91 towns** across New Hampshire, comprising every native turtle species except for the Eastern Box Turtle. A summary of our 2025 intakes can be found in Table 1. In addition, we responded to **747 people** through phone calls and text messages seeking turtle advice. In total, we spent **over 65 cumulative hours on the phone** and exchanged **over 6000 messages** coordinating turtle emergencies with and offering guidance to the public, local animal control officers, conservation officers, and other heroes who want to help turtles in need.

Early June was the most active period of the year, with June 8th having the most time spent on the phone and June 12th seeing the most patient intakes of the season. There are currently around 70 patients who are overwintering with us until it gets warm enough to return them home this upcoming spring.

TABLE 1: NEW HAMPSHIRE TURTLE RESCUE 2025 PATIENT INTAKES

Common Name	Species Name	2024	2025	Change
Blanding’s Turtle*	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	20	61	+205%
Spotted Turtle†	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	12	11	-8.3%
Wood Turtle‡	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	4	11	+175%
Eastern Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta picta</i>	91	195	+114%
Common Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	20	124	+520%
Eastern Musk Turtle	<i>Sternotherus odoratus</i>	2	4	+200%
Total Intakes		149	406	+172%

Unsurprisingly, patient injuries were overwhelmingly due to confirmed or suspected car strikes. Other trauma occurring in much lower frequencies included dog attacks, embedded fishing hooks, suspected bird drops, compromised nests, and an unfortunate new addition this season: entrapment in community stormwater management structures. Human-derived injuries make up almost all of our patient intakes.



FIGURE 2: (LEFT) A RADIOGRAPH OF LEMNA, AN EASTERN MUSK TURTLE HIT BY A CAR ON HER WAY TO NEST. (RIGHT) MARZIPAN, LEMNA’S OFFSPRING WHO WAS AS HEAVY AS AN ALMOND WHEN HATCHED.

* State Endangered; listed as Critically Imperiled (S1)

† State Threatened; listed as Imperiled (S2)

‡ State Species of Special Concern; listed as Vulnerable to Extirpation and Extinction



FIGURE 3: HAZEL, AN ADULT MALE BLANDING’S TURTLE WHO WAS RELEASED BACK HOME IN JUNE 2025 AFTER TWO YEARS OF REHABILITATION TO OVERCOME HIS INJURIES FROM A CAR STRIKE.

WILD TURTLE REHABILITATION PROGRAM RELEASES

A significant number of patients from 2024 (and even a couple of remaining 2023 intakes) needed to be overwintered with us and were released during the spring and summer of 2025, giving us a very full release calendar throughout the warm months. Planning and carrying out releases takes a lot of time and careful research to get right; nonetheless, we managed to **release 218 patients** back to their wild homes in **55 towns** across New Hampshire. A summary of our releases is given in Table 2.

TABLE 2: NEW HAMPSHIRE TURTLE RESCUE 2025 PATIENT RELEASES

Common Name	Species Name	Releases
Blanding’s Turtle*	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	19
Spotted Turtle†	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	1
Wood Turtle‡	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	4
Eastern Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta picta</i>	105
Common Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	87
Eastern Musk Turtle	<i>Sternotherus odoratus</i>	2
Total Releases		218

RESIDENT TURTLE AND AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Our resident turtle roster grew by two in 2025 with the addition of an adult female Eastern Box Turtle (Harriet, age unknown but likely 40+) and an adult female Blanding’s Turtle (Mirabelle, age approx. 25). It is illegal to possess either of these species in New Hampshire without a permit; unfortunately, when an unpermitted turtle is confiscated or surrendered, the state does not have any program in place to deal with those captive individuals. As the sole facility with wildlife rehabilitators permitted to care for these endangered New Hampshire species, it falls to us to look after them indefinitely.

Often, the captive turtles we receive have health and/or history issues that make them unlikely to ever be able to be released back into the wild: metabolic bone disease, permanent disfigurement, shell rot and other fungal or bacterial infections, unknown home origin, disease risks from being co-habitated with non-native turtles (e.g., Red-Eared Sliders) or being fed pathogen vector species (e.g., feeder fish from the pet store), and problematic positive association with humans, amongst other risks.

We are in the process of developing a disease and pathogen testing protocol in coordination with NH Fish & Game and the NH Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, so we are hopeful that some of our residents may have a path for eventual release back into the wild to live out the natural lives that were taken from them.

TABLE 3: NEW HAMPSHIRE TURTLE RESCUE 2025 STATE-LISTED RESIDENTS

Common Name	Species Name	Residents
Blanding’s Turtle*	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	5
Eastern Box Turtle*	<i>Terrapene carolina carolina</i>	3
Spotted Turtle†	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	2
Total State-Listed Residents		10



FIGURE 4: HARRIET, A FEMALE EASTERN BOX TURTLE SURRENDERED TO NHTR IN 2025.



FIGURE 5: A CRITICALLY ENDANGERED EASTERN BOX TURTLE HATCHLING FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE. THIS HATCHLING IS PART OF A HEADSTARTING PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY ZOO NEW ENGLAND AND NH FISH & GAME, AND WILL BE REINTRODUCED TO ITS HOME POPULATION IN 2026.

EASTERN BOX TURTLE HEADSTARTING PROGRAM

Our Eastern Box Turtle headstarting program got some awesome new upgrades in 2025! Thanks to a grant from The Fuller Foundation, we made some much-needed improvements to our setups to give our four young Eastern Box Turtles larger, more naturalistic spaces to continue growing before they are released in late spring or early summer 2026.

These updated enclosures include cameras and sensors to remotely monitor the environment and limit human contact, as well as lighting and precipitation integrated into our automation & control system using custom-made electronics so that daylight cycles and weather patterns can be emulated. Narrowing the gap between their captive enclosure and their wild home environment will allow for a smoother transition and quicker acclimation when our headstarts are released.

WHAT IS HEADSTARTING?

Headstarting is a conservation technique where turtle hatchlings are collected from the wild, raised in a protected environment for their first months or years, and then released once they're big enough to have a much better chance of surviving. An important distinction with headstarting is that the individuals are monitored long-term to assess survival rates and the effectiveness of bolstering their populations by this method.

New Hampshire Turtle Rescue is part of a program led by Zoo New England and NH Fish & Game to monitor and boost populations of critically-endangered Eastern Box Turtles in the state. The very first wild Eastern Box Turtle nests were documented in New Hampshire in 2022, and the eggs were protected and became the first cohort of official headstarted turtles in the state. NHTR raised four of these inaugural headstarts, the last of which were released in early summer 2024. NHTR's current cohort of four come from the second confirmed viable population discovered in New Hampshire.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

In 2025, our field research activities were centered around recovering an adult female Spotted Turtle who was rehabilitated and released with a radio transmitter in 2023 to be able to track her movements. Unfortunately, the battery in her transmitter became depleted before we could find her in the Spring of 2024 after the wetlands had thawed. Though these transmitters are lightweight and placed in a location so as not to encumber the turtle, it is not desirable to have an individual retain a non-functioning device, so we were determined to try to recapture her and remove it.

This effort involved coordinating with the biologists at NH Fish & Game to obtain a scientific collection permit and determine the ideal locations to try to recover the turtle. We were lucky enough to have our summer interns from the University of New Hampshire with us during this project, so they were also able to gain some real-world experience in current field methods for monitoring freshwater turtle populations.

While we were unsuccessful in locating the target individual, we did capture, process (take measurements and mark according to NH Fish & Game's coding system), and release three young adult female Blanding's Turtles and one mature adult female Spotted Turtle — a sign that the area of this project is prime habitat for these threatened & endangered species.

Our other primary research activity in 2025 was initiating a disease and pathogen testing program with the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostics Lab and NH Fish & Game to better understand the disease risks to wild turtle populations, as well as monitor for emerging diseases (e.g., *Emydomyces testavorans*) that have been detected in populations outside of New Hampshire so that action can be taken as quickly as possible. After successfully completing some pilot testing in 2025, will be seeking grant funding in 2026 to scale this testing program up to full capacity.



FIGURE 6: (LEFT) NHTR SUMMER INTERN TREVOR HELPS DREW TAKE MEASUREMENTS OF A YOUNG ADULT FEMALE BLANDING'S TURTLE THAT WAS TRAPPED AND RECORDED FOR NH FISH & GAME BEFORE RELEASE. (RIGHT) A BLANDING'S TURTLE PATIENT IS SWABBED TO TEST FOR PATHOGENS.



FIGURE 7: (LEFT) DREW PROVIDES AN IMPROMPTU LESSON ON TURTLES TO A GROUP OF EARLY LEARNERS WHO DISCOVERED A WAYWARD SNAPPING TURTLE THAT HAD GOTTEN INTO A FENCED-IN AREA. (RIGHT) THE NHTR BOOTH AT THE NOTTINGHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT'S NATIONAL NIGHT OUT.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAM

Our educational programming evolved a lot in 2025, including a refreshed Turtles of New Hampshire presentation, new informational brochures, and more items and exhibits to use at our community booths. **We gave 12 turtle talks** throughout the state and online and had **community booth presence at 6 events and festivals**. These programs were hosted by public libraries, local and state conservation agencies, land trust organizations, and other nonprofit animal interest groups.

We also designed high-visibility turtle crossing yard signs for our supporters to purchase and place on their property to alert drivers about risky areas. We sold **over 50** of signs in 2025!

Our media footprint expanded as well through new partnerships and features. We teamed up with photographer and producer Ben Zackin to create a short video highlighting our work at NHTR; we worked with the film crew at the Game Warden Channel to begin telling the story of an injured musk turtle and her offspring; and we were interviewed for New Hampshire Public Radio's Something Wild podcast, where we encouraged listeners to help out turtles however they can. We also shared our knowledge for articles and features in the Concord Monitor, the Eagle-Tribune, the Union Leader, and the National Wildlife Federation.

Our social media efforts are always centered on creating educational and informational posts. Despite the challenges of authoring narratives and visuals for modern low-information platforms, we are very proud that our **audience grew by 38%** over the course of the year and our content was **shared 2,137 times** and received **over 610,000 views**. While social media is not our focus, we are pleased that our education-first approach appears to still hold some appeal to the public.

OUR TURTLE TEAM

Being able to care for over 400 turtles in a year while running a nonprofit takes a lot of work! NHTR is led by unpaid volunteers, from its board to its president and executive director, and couldn't exist without the many people who have chosen to give their time to our cause.

In 2025, NHTR was able to employ two temporary part-time rehab technicians early in the year to help prepare for the active turtle season. We also had **25 clinic volunteers** who help with patient care and maintenance and expanded our statewide network of **75 active transport volunteers** to help get injured turtles to us as quickly as possible. Our volunteers are the absolute best!

Our 2025 Summer Internship program had three participants supported by the University of New Hampshire College of Life Sciences and Agriculture's SOAR Fund. **Meghan, Trevor, and Calla** gained experience in everything from patient care, communication with the public, researching habitats, planning and carrying out releases, cleaning and sanitizing all sorts of things, and assisting with field research. It would be impossible for us to keep up with all the incoming and outgoing patients in the summer if it weren't for our intrepid interns — they put in a ton of hard work and helped to give many wild turtles another chance at life!

DID YOU KNOW?

New Hampshire Turtle Rescue is still run out of its founders' home, and securing a permanent facility is essential for the long-term stability of our work and the turtles who depend on us. If you or someone you know has land or property that could be donated or dedicated to conservation use, we would be grateful to discuss how it could become a lasting home for NHTR's mission.



FIGURE 8: A WILD ADULT FEMALE WOOD TURTLE ENCOUNTERED DURING A VISIT WITH A LANDOWNER.

TURTLE TITANS

Special Recognition for Major Supporters of New Hampshire's Wild Turtles

Dr. Michael Fraysse	Brian & Stephanie Fischer	Dr. Kimberly Farah
Deb & Ben Kilham	Joan O'Brien	Robert Searle
Sandra Stevens	Susan Britton & Brenton Carey	Lisa Stith
Crystal Schaaf	Teri Simoni	Duncan & Carla McLaughen
Elisabeth Lee	Emerall Reid	Evan Jost
Robert Span	Anita Fernandez	Ed & Liz Coppola
Dr. Tonya Brown	Kathleen Cinfo	Terry Kelley & Mark Pilant
Christen Henry	Barbara Marty	Kenneth Coffin
Nick Loizeaux	Benjamin Gamari	Katrina Rusteika
The Shelly Szymt Group	Sandra R. Horne	Suzanne Mieso

GRATITUDE

These generous people and organizations went above and beyond to support NHTR and New Hampshire's wild turtle populations over the past year:

- The **Cove Charitable Trust** for their major 2023 grant which enabled us to make myriad improvements to our facilities and operations as NHTR was still in its infancy. Their confidence in our mission and early support of our program significantly advanced the capacity for wild turtle care and rehabilitation in New Hampshire for years to come.
- The **New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's Hermit Thrush Fund** for supporting our programs through their generous grants to help us continue to be a resource for New Hampshire's turtles.
- The **Fuller Foundation** for supporting our critically endangered Eastern Box Turtle headstarting program through their Endangered Species Protection grant program.
- The **Caswell Foundation** for their generous grant to expand our camera monitoring equipment to better observe patient health and wellbeing.
- Jeanne Soucy and **The Modern Woodmen of America** for teaming up with us on Giving Tuesday and giving our supporters the opportunity to double their impact by matching their donations.
- Our charitable gaming partner, **Aces & Eights Casino** in Hampton, NH for betting on a bright future for New Hampshire's wild turtles through their program proceeds. We'll put it all on green!
- Rock star **Patrick Fitzgibbons** for organizing performances by Kate Possi, Jon Nolan, and Sneaky Miles benefitting NHTR at the Stone Church Music Club during Newmarket Turtlefest.
- Our very first turtle rescuer, **Kevin Talbot**, for being an ongoing source of support for NHTR and all of New Hampshire's turtles.

- Media master **Ben Zackin** for all his time and effort shadowing us during the 2025 turtle season to promote our work through visual storytelling and thoughtful content creation.
- Our colleagues at **Millstone Wildlife Center** in Windham, NH; **Wings of the Dawn** in Henniker, NH; the **Center for Wildlife** in Cape Neddick, ME; and the **Turtle Rescue League** in Southbridge, MA for working with us to support native New Hampshire turtles.
- The **New Hampshire Animal Rights League (NHARL)** for bringing awareness to risky road crossings and coordinating events to help our wild turtle populations.
- The **Wildlife Rehabilitators' Association of Massachusetts (WRAM)** for their equipment and education grants to help our team provide the best care available to New Hampshire's turtles.
- **Dr. Victoria Jardon, DVM of Mountain Brook Home Veterinary Care** for her patience, kindness, graciousness, and willingness to put up with the demands of being a vet for wildlife rehabilitators.

As we look back on this demanding but deeply rewarding year, we're reminded that the strength of New Hampshire Turtle Rescue comes from the people who choose to care: volunteers, partners, donors, and community members who step in when a turtle needs help. Every patient released, every nest protected, and every conversation that sparks someone's curiosity and respect for wildlife is a shared achievement.

Thank you for standing with us as we work to protect New Hampshire's wild turtles. Together, we're building the kind of future where these species can persist, thrive, and continue to be part of the landscape we all value.

Sincerely,



Dallas Huggins
Founder and Executive Director



Drew Stevens
Founder and President

THE NHTR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chris Bogard	Wendy Booth, Secretary	Karen Campbell
Chris Carr	Dallas Huggins	Sarah Kern
Sharon Martel, Treasurer	Joshua Megyesy, Vice President	Jennifer Purrenhage
David Steinberg	Drew Stevens, President	

“ OUR MISSION IS TO RESCUE, REHABILITATE, RELEASE, AND PRESERVE NATIVE TURTLE SPECIES THROUGH INDIVIDUALIZED CARE, PUBLIC EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF IMPERILED POPULATIONS OF WILD NEW HAMPSHIRE TURTLES. ”



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