

## CHAPTER 41

**AN ACT** designating the Bog Turtle as the New Jersey State Reptile, and supplementing chapter 9A of Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle is a small turtle with a distinct orange patch on either side of its head and a brown to black shell; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle is one of the smallest turtles in the world and one of the rarest in North America; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle can be found in 12 New Jersey counties and formerly populated all but three of New Jersey's counties; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle inhabits shallow spring-fed fens, bogs, swamps, marshy meadows, and wet pastures, where it spends most of its time submerged in mud; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle consumes a varied diet including insects, snails, worms, seeds, and carrion; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle depends on a natural habitat that has a diverse array of open fields and shrubbery for foraging, nesting, basking, and hibernating; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bog Turtle generally hibernates from mid-September through mid-April, and is easiest to find in mid-April through June when it suns itself on matted vegetation; and

**WHEREAS**, The State of New Jersey listed the Bog Turtle as an endangered species in 1974 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Bog Turtle as a threatened species in 1997; and

**WHEREAS**, The New Jersey field office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners with environmental community groups and private landowners to maintain and expand the Bog Turtle's habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, The State of New Jersey's Endangered and Nongame Species Program through the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife also works with private landowners and environmental organizations to identify Bog Turtle habitats, manage land where Bog Turtles are found, and educate landowners about federal cost-sharing programs which help finance preservation efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey's history of agriculture has benefitted the Bog Turtle as grazing animals help maintain the open-canopy herbaceous wetlands, which Bog Turtles prefer, by controlling woody shrubs and invasive species, and current preservation efforts involve allowing farm animals to graze in Bog Turtle habitats; and

**WHEREAS**, A majority of states across the country have designated an official state reptile to accompany their state symbols, but New Jersey has not done so; and

**WHEREAS**, Designating the Bog Turtle as the State Reptile will increase the public profile of the Bog Turtle, and encourage the conservation of the species and its habitat; and

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

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

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

C.52:9A-13 Bog turtle designated as State reptile.

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

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved June 18, 2018.