

TOP 10 NOMINATION FORM

2020 Topic: Illegal wildlife (plants and animals) trafficking and unsustainable trade

Species must meet these qualifications:

- Must be native U.S. species or international species with significant U.S. demand
- Must be experiencing substantial decline (do not have to be threatened/endangered listed)
- Must be directly or indirectly impacted
 - Direct: exploited as trophies, pets, medicines, etc.
 - Indirect: impacted by imported exotics or imported disease vectors (e.g., chytrid)

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Nominated Species Pascagoula Map Turtle, *Graptemys gibbonsi*:

Question 1: Threat to the Species

Endemic to the Southeastern United States, the Pascagoula map turtle is threatened by a robust international pet trade and continuing trade in turtles for consumption in Asian markets. The species is classified as “Endangered” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and is declining.¹ It is only found along the banks of the Pascagoula River and its tributaries in southern Mississippi.² Though the species is listed on Appendix III under CITES, it is not protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Researchers believe that the species qualifies for listing on Appendix I of CITES and ESC members (Center for Biological Diversity et. al.) have petitioned for listing under the ESA as well as sued the US Fish and Wildlife Service for their failure to act on the petition within statutory deadlines.³

Question 2: Role of the Species

Pascagoula map turtles are highly specialized niche species that play an important role in their ecosystems. Where they are found, they are the most abundant of turtle species and are a

¹ van Dijk, P.P. 2011. *Graptemys gibbonsi* (errata version published in 2016). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2011: e.T184436A97294046. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2011-1.RLTS.T184436A8275938.en>. Downloaded on 11 May 2020.

² David Perpiñán, Sonia M. Hernandez-Divers, Kenneth S. Latimer, Thomas Akre, Chris Hagen, Kurt A. Buhlmann, and Stephen J. Hernandez-Divers "Hematology of the Pascagoula Map Turtle (*Graptemys Gibbonsi*) and the Southeast Asian Box Turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*)," *Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine* 39(3), 460-463, (1 September 2008). <https://doi.org/10.1638/2007-0044.1>

³ See “Lawsuit Launched Over Federal Failure to Protect Turtles in Louisiana, Mississippi.” Press Release. Center for Biological Diversity. 13 Nov. 2018. Accessed at:

https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2018/map-turtles-11-13-2018.php

primary food source for predator species, as well as a secondary food source for other species through the hosting of aquatic parasites such as leaches and worms.⁴

Question 3: Message

The Pascagoula map turtle is a prime example of how robust international commercial trade for consumption and the pet trade affects even niche species here in the U.S. Limited legal protections at the national and international levels will likely drive this species to extinction, especially given the additional threat of climate change.

Final Selections

If my nomination is selected for inclusion in the report, I would like the first draft of the species profile for the report to be written by (choose one):

You (ESC), and then my NGO will edit the profile and approve the final draft.

Me (my NGO). I understand that I (and other participating writers) will need to adhere to ESC's writing guidelines.

Deadline: May 8, 2020

Send to: top10@endangered.org

⁴ Peripinan et. al.