

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Turtles in Trouble –
Bruce Museum Invites Citizen Scientists to Help!**



Eastern Box Turtle is featured on the Connecticut Turtle Atlas project page. Photo by Tim Walsh

GREENWICH, CT, April 16, 2015 - With approximately 58 percent of the world's 335 turtle species threatened with extinction, turtles are the most endangered vertebrate group in the world. This month, the Bruce Museum in Greenwich invites people to help turtles with the launch of the *Connecticut Turtle Atlas* Citizen Science project.

“The unassuming turtle is seldom on the mind of most people,” says Tim Walsh, Bruce Museum Citizen Science Coordinator, “but they are a top priority for many conservation biologists. Turtles can play key ecological roles, serving as both predators and prey, contributing to the cycling of nutrients, and acting as seed dispersers.”

Anyone interested in turtles or the outdoors can participate, including families, children, individuals and classrooms. Participants in this new Bruce Museum Citizen Science initiative will collect data on all turtle species found throughout the state as they help scientists track turtle distribution and abundance. The project runs from April through November and will continue on an annual basis.

“The state of Connecticut is home to twelve native turtle species that inhabit our woodlands, wetlands, and even the waters of Long Island Sound,” says Tim Walsh. “The primary threats to turtles in the state include habitat loss and traffic-related highway mortality. Worldwide, turtles are negatively affected by threats such as collection for food and pets, disease, and changing climates, as well as habitat loss and fragmentation.”



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Press Release

“The goals of the Bruce Museum’s *Connecticut Turtle Atlas* include developing a public understanding of turtle ecology, promoting ways in which people can help turtles, and gathering research-quality data for use in publication and sharing with scientists,” Walsh explains.

Participants will learn about the wonderful diversity of turtles and their benefits to the ecology. No experience is required, but access to a smart phone, camera or a computer is helpful. Using a smartphone app, volunteer scientists can gather information that will be used to map distributions, identify important habitats, locate areas of nesting abundance, and detect roadways with high traffic-related mortality. In addition, the Bruce Museum will provide opportunities to assist with other aspects of turtle research and fieldwork.

This is the second of three Citizen Science projects the Museum is coordinating this year – the others help identify ants and track domestic cats outdoors.

“Citizen Science harnesses the passion of the public to become amateur researchers, which helps not only with the gathering of important data on a wide scale but also with inspiring a new generation of future scientists,” Walsh says. “Citizen Science provides fun and interesting projects with real-world implications, breaks down barriers between society and scientist, opens discussion on STEM subjects and current events, shares research outcomes, and acknowledges participants’ important contributions.”

Anyone interested in helping with the Bruce Museum *Connecticut Turtle Atlas* Citizen Science project should contact Tim Walsh, Bruce Museum Citizen Science Coordinator, at twalsh@brucemuseum.org or (203) 413-6767.

About the Bruce Museum

The Bruce Museum is a museum of art and science and is located at One Museum Drive in Greenwich, Connecticut. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is \$7 for adults, \$6 for students up to 22 years, \$6 for seniors and free for members and children less than five years. Individual admission is free on Tuesday. Free on-site parking is available and the Museum is accessible to individuals with disabilities. For additional information, call the Bruce Museum at (203) 869-0376 or visit the website at brucemuseum.org

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