



Rhode Island Reptile and Amphibian Rules and Regulations

POSSESSION OF NATIVE SPECIES

April 2022

Possession or removal from the wild of any native reptile or amphibian is illegal*.

This prohibition applies both to live animals and animal remains. Why? Rhode Island's reptiles and amphibians face pressure from numerous threats. For many species, removal of even a single adult individual from the wild can lead to local extinction. It is illegal to sell, purchase, or own/possess native species in any context, even if acquired through a pet store or online.

Animals that have been held in captivity can transmit deadly pathogens to wild populations. Under no circumstance should a captive animal, whether native or non-native, be released into the wild. If you have questions about animals currently in your possession, call the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife at (401) 789-0281.

**Permits are available for hunting, scientific collection, and professional exhibition (details outlined below). For a list of all reptile and amphibian species native to Rhode Island, see RIDEM regulation [250-RICR-40-05-3.17](#) sections A3 & A4.*

COMMERCIAL TRADE IN NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Rhode Island law offers the opportunity to own a variety of non-native reptiles and amphibians as pets. Some species require [special permits](#) issued by the Division of Agriculture. For detailed rules and regulations regarding possession of non-native ("exotic") reptile and amphibian species, see RIDEM regulation [250-RICR-40-05-3.17](#) sections A3 & A4.

Federal law prohibits the sale of viable turtle eggs or any live turtle with a carapace length shorter than four inches. This regulation applies regardless of species or geographic origin, as small turtles are associated with an increased *Salmonella* risk for young children.



It is illegal to sell any turtle smaller than four inches!

SCIENTIFIC COLLECTION & PROFESSIONAL EXHIBITION

Possession of native species for valid research and exhibition purposes is allowed with a permit. Individuals requesting permission to use native reptiles or amphibians for [research](#) or [professional exhibition](#) should submit a permit application to the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife. Permit applicants are required to pay a processing fee of \$25 per permit.

HUNTING & TRAPPING

Snapping turtles, bullfrogs, and green frogs can be legally hunted in Rhode Island.

A current fishing, hunting, or trapping license is required to harvest these species and hunting/trapping must be conducted in compliance with season and size regulations (see table below). All animals harvested must be killed immediately following capture—possession of live turtles or frogs is illegal.

SPECIES	SEASON	SIZE LIMIT	BAG LIMIT	LEGAL TAKE METHODS
common snapping turtle (<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>)	year round, excluding May 15 - July 15	13 inch minimum carapace length	6 per season	hand, dip net, turtle traps*, snagging, bow and arrow
bullfrog (<i>Lithobates catesbeianus</i>)	year round, excluding June 1 - July 31	none	20 per day (both species combined)	hand, dip net, spearing, hook and line, bow and arrow
green frog (<i>Lithobates clamitans</i>)				

*Turtle traps must be marked with the trapper's name and address, checked every 24 hours, and set in a manner that will allow turtles access to air. All bycatch must be released immediately at the location where the trap was set.

SPECIAL CASES

A few additional general prohibitions are in place to prevent the spread of invasive species and zoonotic disease:

- Red eared slider turtles (*Trachemys scripta*) and non-native amphibian species must be kept indoors (outdoor enclosures are prohibited).
- Importation or possession of mudpuppies (*Necturus spp.*) is prohibited.
- Possession of live bullfrogs (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) is prohibited but cooked or frozen flesh can be imported for human consumption.

For a more detailed explanation of the relevant laws, see RIDEM regulation [250-RICR-40-05-3.7](#).

Help protect Rhode Island wildlife!

Witness illegal possession or sale of native reptiles or amphibians?

Report violations to the RIDEM Environmental Police hotline by calling (401) 222-3070.



See native reptiles or amphibians in the wild?

Join RIDEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife as a community scientist by downloading our free [Herp Observer app](#)! By submitting your observations of wild reptiles and amphibians directly to our secure databases, you can help us understand where species are found throughout the state. This information is essential for effective conservation and management of our slimy and scaly neighbors. We welcome observations of all species, whether common or rare!



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