



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

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ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPEAKER

MEMBER
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Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky (85th) in Support of HB 5354 (Raised), An Act Concerning Snapping Turtles and Red-Eared Slider Turtles

Before the Environment Committee (ENV)
March 9, 2018 11:00 a.m.

Several years ago the legislature unwisely legalized the sale of a non-native turtle, the red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta*) which was surplus from fish farms in the South. I strenuously opposed this change because animals purchased as pets often end up in the wild when their owner's family tires of them. In fact, released red-eared sliders are now reproducing in Connecticut, according to biologists in the field, including Dennis Richardson of Quinnipiac University, who has found them in his surveys. This species is bigger and bulkier than most of our native aquatic turtles and is therefore capable of out-competing and displacing the natives. The Environment Committee should amend the bill to prohibit the importation and sale of red-eared sliders in the state.

The bill also deals with regulation of snapping turtles. Snapping turtles are a large, native predator, important as the key apex predator in water bodies in Connecticut. They are abundant today, but that could change as the animals are collected and exported for food to Asian countries. The Environment Committee should amend the bill to have DEEP monitor the number of snapping turtles taken in the state each year to determine whether the rate is sustainable, as we do now with deer hunting. The bill should also establish a commercial license for anyone who intends to collect snapping turtles for sale. If the removal of these animals may deplete the population, the regulatory agency will then be able to take action to stop it.

Thank you for raising the bill.