



American Tortoise Rescue “Shellebrates” World Turtle Day®

ATR created and launched www.WorldTurtleDay.org to increase respect for and knowledge about one of the world's oldest creatures.

MALIBU, CA, USA, September 29, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Theme “Save Us” Reflects Millions of Lives Lost at Live Food Markets and Disappearing Endangered Turtles

[American Tortoise Rescue](http://www.AmericanTortoiseRescue.org) (ATR), a nonprofit organization established in 1990 for the protection of all species of tortoise and turtle, is “shellebrating” its 20th annual [World Turtle Day](http://www.WorldTurtleDay.org)® on May 23, 2020. With this year’s theme “Save Us,” ATR puts its focus squarely on the worldwide live “wet” food markets and the growing threat of extinction of endangered turtles and tortoises.

ATR created and launched www.WorldTurtleDay.org to increase respect for and knowledge about one of the world's oldest creatures. Observed around the globe for 20 years, turtle and tortoise lovers take “shellfies” and shellebrate in the U.S., Canada, Pakistan, Borneo, India, Australia, the UK, Greece and many other countries.

“This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are encouraging those who want to join the shellebration to do so virtually,” said Susan Tellem, RN, BSN, co-founder and executive director of ATR. “They can follow us and join our events live on Facebook and Instagram at World Turtle Day, find tips for fun things to do on www.worldturtleday.org and have the opportunity to win cool turtle gifts. Even though we can’t meet in person, we can show our love of these beautiful creatures by enjoying experiences together through social media.”

These gentle animals survived 200 million years, yet they are rapidly disappearing as a result of smuggling, the exotic food live food market industry in the U.S. and internationally, habitat destruction, climate change and the cruel pet trade. Biologists and other experts predict the disappearance of turtles and tortoises in the wild within the next 50 years.

“Our theme this year is Save Us!,” Tellem said, who co-founded the sanctuary with her husband, Marshall Thompson, 30 years ago. Together, they have rescued and rehomed more than 4,000 turtles and tortoises. “You can help by not taking turtles out of the wild or purchasing a turtle from a pet store, online or at a swap meet,” she added. Tellem also suggests reporting to U.S. Fish & Wildlife any tiny turtles less than four inches sold at pet stores, by street vendors or used as prizes at carnivals and other events. Their sale has been illegal since 1974. Most die after

purchase, years before they should.

The duo have been very active for more than 20 years advocating for the close of live food markets in California. It took the COVID-19 pandemic to open the world's eyes to the horrors of these markets. Thinking that they exist only in China, many people ignored ATR's warning that these global markets cause human illnesses and deaths, as well as terrible suffering of animals worldwide, even shockingly here in the U.S.

"Millions of turtles are routinely stacked four and five deep, often on filthy sidewalks in the sun without food or water and butchered while fully conscious. Often, they are sent home with the purchaser in paper bags to suffer an even worse fate out of sight," Tellem said.

"Diseases such as E. coli, salmonella and pasturella (all potentially fatal in humans), plus cases of giardia, blood parasites and even one case of malaria, were revealed during random testing of market turtles. The market animals are stressed, frightened and kept in horrible conditions, which makes their immune systems vulnerable to unleashing diseases that affect humans. It breaks our hearts to see them suffer like this," Tellem said.

The head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has been quoted as saying that wet markets are an important source of affordable food and livelihood for millions of people all over the world, admitting that in many places they have been poorly regulated and maintained. "Every market we have been to in California was disgusting," Tellem said. "No one regulates them because there are powerful Asian legislators with hands-off permission to operate by the California Department of Fish and Game and the Governor."

Some of the highlights to help make virtual World Turtle Day special include:

- Everyone can join the party at home. ATR created a World Turtle Day Party Pack that can be accessed for free here <http://bit.ly/1YwebJR>
- "Like" the World Turtle Day page on Facebook and Instagram to join thousands of fans who are posting shellfies, videos and photos in honor of World Turtle Day.
- Follow @WorldTurtleDay on Twitter. Every year, thousands of people help the day trend on twitter by tweeting #worldturtleday to spread the good word about turtles.
- Join the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles as they Shellebrate the 30th anniversary of the hugely popular film. The virtual party will take place on Saturday, May 23. Details to come!
- Sign up for cool videos and ideas at www.youtube.com/americanortrescue

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Please tweet these tweets

#Shellebrate and protect turtles and tortoises on #WorldTurtleDay May 23

#shellebrate #worldturtleday May 23

#Free #WorldTurtleDay® Party Pack <http://bit.ly/2qdo4El>

#WorldTurtleDay® May 23 #SaveUs

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