

# WORLD TURTLE DAY ON MAY 23 'SHELLEBRATES' 26 YEARS AS TURTLES FACE A TIPPING POINT

*Annual Observance Launches New Website, Merch Shop, Expanded Resources, and Renewed Global Growth Strategy*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, March 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Turtles have survived 220 million years, outlasting dinosaurs, ice ages, and mass extinctions. Today, conservationists warn their next 50 years may be their most uncertain. On May 23, American Tortoise Rescue (ATR) will shellebrate the 26th annual World Turtle Day®, a global movement mobilizing people to learn about, protect, and advocate for turtles and tortoises and their disappearing habitats.



Press assets are available to view and download at <https://worldturtleday.org/press>.

It is estimated that 61 percent of turtle species are threatened or already extinct. Smuggling, the exotic food and cruel pet trades, habitat destruction, and climate change continue to push these ancient animals toward the brink. Biologists warn that without significant action, turtle and tortoise populations could decline dramatically within decades.

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*said Susan Tellem, co-founder of American Tortoise Rescue.*

“Turtles survived the dinosaurs. It would be a tragedy if they couldn't survive us,” said Susan Tellem, co-founder of American Tortoise Rescue. “World Turtle Day turns

admiration into action and honors the ancient resilience of turtles and tortoises, as well as our passionate community of people around the world working to ensure their continued existence,” says Tellem.

Founded in 1990 by Tellem and her husband, Marshall Thompson, ATR launched World Turtle Day in 2000 to raise global awareness about turtle and tortoise conservation. What began as a grassroots awareness effort has grown into an international observance. In 2025, World Turtle Day reached more than 100 million people across nearly 70 countries, with events, “shellfies,” and shellebrations taking place in the U.S., Canada, India, Australia, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Borneo, Greece, and beyond.

The 2026 observance marks a new chapter for the organization. ATR is unveiling a redesigned World Turtle Day website, expanded free educational resources and official merchandise, and a renewed strategy focused on scaling the global reach of the annual event. As part of this transition, ATR’s longtime sanctuary residents, including its largest tortoises and nearly 100 additional turtles and tortoises, have been relocated to Turtle and Tortoise Rescue of Arroyo Grande (TTRAG), a volunteer-led sanctuary providing expanded space and lifelong care. ATR encourages contributions to TTRAG here to support the animals’ continued food, habitat, and veterinary needs.

“World Turtle Day supporters are encouraged to participate on and leading up to May 23 by hosting events, posting “shellfies” on social media, and advocating for stronger protections. Our new website has free resources, kid-friendly activities, event listings, swag, and everything else needed to make this year’s World Turtle Day the best one yet,” says Tellem.



Follow World Turtle Day® on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X, where millions of fans share their passion of turtles and tortoises all day long. For more information, visit [www.worldturtleday.org](http://www.worldturtleday.org) or email [worldturtleday@tortoise.com](mailto:worldturtleday@tortoise.com).

World Turtle Day® is a registered trademark of American Tortoise Rescue. Please use the registered symbol ®.

#### About American Tortoise Rescue

American Tortoise Rescue (ATR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection, rescue, rehabilitation, and lifelong care of all species of turtles and tortoises. Founded in 1990 by Susan Tellem and Marshall Thompson, ATR was the first sanctuary in the United States focused exclusively on these gentle reptiles. The organization, based in Malibu, California, has helped thousands of turtles and tortoises through rescue, rehoming, education, and advocacy efforts, and has served as a global information hub about proper care, feeding, and rehabilitation. ATR created World Turtle Day®, celebrated annually on May 23 to raise global awareness and inspire action to protect these ancient creatures and their habitats. Located in Malibu, ATR relies on volunteers and donations to support its mission, with every contribution going directly toward programs that help turtles and tortoises thrive.

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