

Emailed testimony from Jim Andrews April 10, 2025

Amy, at our Endangered Species Committee meeting yesterday, we were informed that bill H-230 was being reviewed by your committee. As you know, H-230 includes a section that relates to reptile and amphibian conservation. It was the Scientific Advisory Group on Reptiles and Amphibians (a group that I have chaired for decades), that originally communicated the need for better protection of non-listed reptiles and amphibians in Vermont. One concern was that released pets were being reported from around the state. Most of those species do not survive our winters. However, the Pond Slider can and does. It has been reported from a variety of towns across the state. This is a species that has established invasive populations in many states just south of us, and may soon establish populations here in Vermont as the climate continues to warm. We felt the importation of this species needed to be controlled for the protection of our native turtles. H-230 sets the groundwork to control invasive reptiles and amphibians.

In addition, those reptiles and amphibians that are not federally or state-listed can now be legally shot or killed for any reason (if you have a hunting license). I have turtle shells I use for educational purposes that contain bullet holes, and there are those people who will kill any snake for any reason. Consequently, we felt we needed to establish some protections for these species, particularly rare or unusual species.

I can't speak for all the language included in this package bill,

but the herpetologists in this state are very much in favor of the language that protects reptiles and amphibians.

We did not request the language that allows F & W to open seasons and set bag limits on common species such as North American Snapping Turtles or North American Bullfrogs, but F & W felt it might be necessary to include those provisions in order to get the protective language passed. This is because some unknown number of people do eat Snapping Turtles and/or Bullfrogs. Personally, we don't feel either species requires that type of management, although some populations may be able to sustain limited takings. Snapping Turtles concentrate toxins in their flesh and may not be healthy to eat depending on where they have lived, and I personally believe that Bullfrogs are in decline in some areas of the state. Of course allowing them to set bag limits, does not mean that they would.

If you would like any additional details on our concerns, or would like some of us to testify in person, let me know.

Jim Andrews
642 Smead Road
Salisbury, VT 05769
802-352-4734
jandrews@vtherpatlas.org
VtHerpAtlas.org

"Anyone who believes that exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist"
(Kenneth Boulding, 1973)

