‘We are causing them to go extinct’

Humans are major threat to species. This University of Northern Iowa professor is working to save rare Iowa turtles.

She-Hulk, an Iowa wood turtle, is checked on by Rachel McDonnell, 25, a student doing research with Northern Iowa professor Jeffrey Tamplin, in a forest near Cedar Falls. "If this harmed her in any way, I wouldn’t do it," says Tamplin, who names the turtles he studies.

She-Hulk, an Iowa wood turtle, is known for her love of poison ivy.

Northern Iowa professor Jeffrey Tamplin, in a forest near Cedar Falls. "If this harmed her in any way, I wouldn’t do it," says Tamplin, who names the turtles he studies.

Second of two parts

Transformation of the college sports landscape by name, image, likeness compensation could factor into their opportunities.

Recruits are already hearing about name, image, likeness opportunities.

INSIDE: The Register spoke with high-end Iowa high school athletes to get a sense of how name, image and likeness compensation could factor into their recruitment. 1B

One of the nation’s top 2023 prospects, Omaha Burke senior and Nebraska commit Dax Blanton, delivers the Register. "That’s something own policies on the matter starting July 1. "Around the country, everybody’s looking at July 1 to see how it ends up and what it looks like state by state," Iowa State football player personnel director Derek Hoedt told the Register. "That’s something
"If this harmed her in any way, I wouldn't do it," explained Tamplin, a herpetologist, taking She-Hulk's temperature. "Usually they let us off and say, OK, let's go over this. They've had too many people walk their property for the years. They've used it to track them." Tamplin, a lead researcher on the species and a professor in the department of Zoology, uses data to paint a picture of She-Hulk's ideal world. She prefers to live near a stream with highly oxygenated water, buffeted against the banks by a little more than just the right amount of open space. Typically, She-Hulk’s mullints, or two, somewhere nearby where she can indulge her appetite. Knowing exactly where the turtles tick may help save them from extinction — something that Tamplin, now 20 years into his research, has made his life’s work.

10.5% of species under threat

Thousands of years ago, wood turtles likely moved south to escape the glaciers that covered the land that is now Iowa. When the glacial period ended, they went north. In the process, Iowa’s band of the species broke away from the broader population and became genetically distinct, or a “popsphere isolate.”

As far as researchers have deduced, the turtles lived in the northeastern corner of the state. But She-Hulk and the other wood turtles are also part of a more sinister designation: one of the 180 species of wildlife in the state whose habitats, like ponds and mussels, are listed as endangered, threatened or “special concern” for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

All together, 20.3% of the 1,204 species found in Iowa are under threat. “Humans are the leading reason why,” Tamplin said. “As Iowa has lost its prairies, its wetlands, some of those critters that used to depend on those areas just aren’t able to adapt to the changes we made on the landscape. That’s a major reason why they became endangered.” Iowa DNR wildlife biologist Jason Auel said.

Just 7% of Iowa’s wetlands, 0.28% of its native prairies and 37% of its forests remain after being converted to spaces for agriculture, housing, industry, agriculture and other human uses beginning in the 1900s, according to a 2015 DNR report. Tamplin sees the turtles right: “Survive as a true herpetologist, or a scientist, is like helping a dog reach an itch. I understand what it has taken for these turtles to have made it this far.”

Breaking off from a common ancestor some 50 million years ago, wood turtles live in a climate of warm- ing and glaciation; they later persevered despite being hunted for food by Native Americans and European colonizers. The turtles are part of the Iowa’s “ghost population,” a group of species that became rare as they couldn’t hatchlings easily, if ever, to make it to sex-

The turtles are part of Iowa’s “ghost population,” or a group of elder adults that were once ultra-abundant, in part because the ex- trauma of the turtles being part of Iowa’s “ghost population,” a group of species that became rare as they couldn’t hatchlings easily, if ever, to make it to sex-

For Rachel McDonnell, an aspiring conservationist and UNI graduate student who eventually plans to move to Iowa, seeing She-Hulk账面 bit like a treasure hunt.

"If you're interested in being a herpetologist, or a scientist, is like helping a dog reach an itch. I understand what it has taken for these turtles to have made it this far."
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