



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Stephanie Haan-Amato
Communications Director
(575) 652-6957 | shaanamato@ARCProtects.org

[Media Kit & Background Information](#) | [Images & Logos](#)

Restoring Rare Wetlands Gives Imperiled Bog Turtles a Path Toward Recovery

Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy Leads Restoration of 10 Critical Wetlands

NORTH CAROLINA AND VIRGINIA, July 29, 2026 – Hidden among the Southern Appalachian Mountains are increasingly rare wetlands that support one of the country’s most imperiled turtles, the [bog turtle](#). Over the past three years, the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC) and its partners have restored 10 bog turtle wetlands in North Carolina and Virginia, improving more than 15 acres of habitat and helping give this imperiled turtle much better odds.

“Bog turtles are hanging on in a landscape that has changed dramatically,” said JJ Apodaca, ARC Executive Director. “Many of the wetlands they need have been drained, overgrown, or fragmented over time. By restoring these habitats, we’re giving bog turtles the conditions they need to reproduce and survive, helping to reconnect populations across the landscape.”

Bog turtles depend on open-canopy, sunny wetlands with saturated, mucky soils and a diversity of native plants. But these rare ecosystems have declined across the Southeast as wetlands have been lost or altered for development and agriculture. Historically, North Carolina supported nearly 5,000 acres of mountain bogs, but only about 500 largely degraded acres remain today.

Over time, many of the remaining bogs became overgrown as trees and shrubs shaded out the open habitat bog turtles need. Invasive plants began to replace native vegetation. Drainage and erosion changed the way water moved through these wetlands. These changes reduced the muddy areas where bog turtles forage and nest.

To restore these wetlands, ARC teams worked with partners and landowners. At one site, a large, illegal drainage ditch had been dug through the center of a wetland where bog turtles were once found. After the wetland dried out, bog turtles were not recorded at the site for more than five years. ARC worked with partners to install a series of [log jams](#) using logs, soil, and clay to slow water movement.

“We are basically acting like beavers,” explained ARC Southern Appalachians Program Coordinator Emily Nolan. “By burying logs and packing them with mud within drainage ditches, we slow the flow of

water and raise the water table. As that water spreads back across the wetland, it recreates the muddy habitat bog turtles need to forage, nest, and overwinter.”

Because these bogs are sensitive to disturbance, most of the restoration work is completed by hand using small field crews equipped with loppers, shovels, and chainsaws. Teams remove invasive shrubs such as multiflora rose, privet, barberry, and honeysuckle, thin trees that shade the wetlands, remove drainage features, and install log jams to slow water and restore the saturated conditions bog turtles depend on.

“One of the most rewarding aspects of bog turtle habitat restoration is how quickly these wetlands bounce back,” said Nolan. “Within hours of repairing a drainage ditch, you can often watch water begin to spread back across the wetland. In some bogs, it just takes a couple of people and a few hours of dirty work to make a significant, lasting impact for bog turtles and their habitat.”

Restoring habitat is one part of ARC’s broader effort to protect bog turtles across the Southern Appalachians. Because many remaining populations are isolated in small pockets of suitable habitat, reconnecting and improving wetlands is critical for helping turtles move across the landscape and maintain healthy populations.

“Bog turtles exist in a fragmented landscape with very few pristine habitats left,” said Nolan. “Restoring struggling wetlands gives them a better chance of finding areas to overwinter, bask, forage, and reproduce. It gives them a chance to be a healthier population and have a future.”

The need for restoration became even more urgent after Hurricane Helene swept through the Southern Appalachians in 2024. Floodwaters eroded streambanks, buried wetlands under sediment, and damaged habitat at several bog turtle sites. ARC worked with partners to remove debris, restore hydrology, and help damaged sites recover.

“Bog turtle recovery won’t happen through a single action,” said Apodaca. “It requires working together across the landscape to restore habitats and boost populations. We can’t prevent every challenge these turtles will face, but we can give them stronger, more connected habitats that help them recover and withstand unpredictable events.”

About Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC)

Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy, or ARC, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on identifying and conserving the highest priority places for amphibians and reptiles in the United States. We protect endangered amphibians and reptiles through a strategic, scientific, and passionate approach. We believe the conservation of amphibians, reptiles, and the habitats they depend on is vitally important. To learn more, visit ARCProtects.org.

###