

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Monday, I read an article entitled, "It's turtle time again," (Erik Makic, *La Crosse Tribune*, August 10, 2020, pg. A1-A2). Perhaps living in Wilton for almost 1.5 years, has made me more cognizant of wood turtles and turtles in general! While the article is about freshwater turtles, it doesn't specifically mention wood turtles. However, it does encourage readers to be aware that now is the time of year that many turtles are looking for places to lay their eggs. Here is the process:

They sniff around yards and beaches trying to find the ideal location.

Digging with their hind legs, the holes are often no deeper than four inches and contain anywhere between four and 12 eggs in a single clutch.

A clutch is a single grouping of laid eggs, which when completed is filled back up by the turtle with the dug-out material. (pg. A1)

We don't have as many wood turtles in our area anymore. Turtle eggs are affected by temperature, and multiple factors can influence temperature, including "...how deeply the eggs were buried, how close to water they are, river depth fluctuations, soil type, sun exposure, and even climate change that causes overall warmer temperatures year to year." (pg. A2)

In my letter of last Sunday, I wrote about climate change, but it did not occur to me that climate change might be affecting how many wood turtles we have in the Wilton area. We know that climate change is impacting the ice caps, coral reefs, rainforests, and areas with hurricanes and tropical storms. But, climate change is most likely also affecting what is happening much closer to us.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website, wood turtles are considered to be a Threatened Species in Wisconsin. They have protected status in the state and federally. Some wood turtles have been lost to businesses that sell turtles. Some have been lost to changes in their natural habitat. Some have been lost to road accidents.

I am not a scientist, so my understanding of all of these things is limited, but it seems to bring closer-to-home the importance of creation care. During this time of year, we can especially look out for turtles and other creatures. We can seek to protect them, and to provide habitats where they can thrive. They, too, are part of God's creation and God has given us the responsibility to care for them. Let us do what we can to help.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy