

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Brevard Zoo, Roger Williams Zoo Partner to Care for Nine Confiscated Box Turtles**

MELBOURNE, Fla., December 18, 2025 — Nine Gulf Coast box turtles have found safety again after being rescued by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) from wildlife trafficking.

In August, Wei Qiang Lin of New York [pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York](#) for falsely labeling live turtles as “plastic animal toys” before exporting them in delivery boxes on a weeks-long journey to Hong Kong, [according to a news release](#). The turtles were found bound and taped inside knotted socks within the shipping boxes by law enforcement. Lin is scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 23.

These nine box turtles were initially brought to Roger Williams Park Zoo in Rhode Island for care before moving to Brevard Zoo in early December. The group is now in good health and living their best lives in an outdoor habitat with another group of their species – eight box turtles who were also rescued from wildlife trafficking.

The turtles will stay with Brevard Zoo with the goal to eventually release them back to their native range, as directed by state and federal authorities.

Wildlife trafficking is one of the largest illegal trades, after drug and human trafficking, and is estimated to be worth between \$7-23 billion per year. Zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) – like Brevard Zoo and Roger Williams Park Zoo – are always ready to do their part in helping animals in need – but this issue continues to increase in scope and severity.

Wildlife trafficking is a crisis on a number of fronts, from animal wellbeing to biodiversity. As seen in this case, victims of wildlife trafficking are often subjected to horrific conditions during transport. We’re thankful these nine survived their initial journey – even this is rare

in trafficking. The few surviving animals are then sold to people who often don't know how to meet their basic needs.

Found in Florida's panhandle, Gulf Coast box turtles have several roles in their ecosystem like spreading seeds, controlling populations of some of their favorite snacks like insects and other invertebrates, and more.

By removing box turtles and other creatures from their native habitat, trafficking pushes these species toward extinction. This act disrupts ecosystems, which affects everyone. By preserving biodiversity, we protect our earth for our community and those to come.

The public can help defend species from wildlife trafficking by:

- Reporting social media posts that advertise exotic species as pets – and by not interacting with them further.
- Being an informed consumer and thinking twice before you purchase an exotic pet. Visit NotAPet.Net to learn more.
- Contacting the USFWS Tips line at <https://www.fws.gov/wildlife-crime-tips> or 1-844-FWS-TIPS (1-844-397- 8477) to report wildlife trafficking.

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Brevard Zoo is home to more than 700 animals representing 170 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at [BrevardZoo.org](http://BrevardZoo.org).