

Submitted by **MICHAEL G. FRICK**, Caretta Research Project, P.O. Box 661, Tybee Island, Georgia 31328, USA; e-mail: Caretta05@aol.com.

CHELYDRA SERPENTINA (Common Snapping Turtle). **PREDATION.** Since its introduction into North America in the 1930's, the South American fire ant, *Solenopsis invicta*, has spread throughout the southeastern United States. Fire ants have been observed interfering with a nesting turtle (Whiting 1994. Herpetol. Rev. 25:25), and preying on tortoises (Landers et al. 1980. Herpetologica 36:353–361), alligators, (Allen et al. 1997. J. Herpetol. 31:318–321) and other species of reptiles (Mount et al. 1981. J. Alabama Acad. Sci. 52:71–78). On 19 September 1992, I discovered a nest of *Chelydra serpentina* along the north shore of the Little Cahaba River, ca. 1.7 km upstream from its junction with the Cahaba River, in Jefferson Co., Alabama. Six dead hatchlings were found on or just below the surface of the nest. A large number of fire ants were on and among the hatchling snapping turtles. The nest did not appear to have been disturbed by a vertebrate predator as there was no excavation of soil at the site, and the turtles were intact with no visible injuries. All of the turtles had a prominent plastral yolk sac of an appropriate size for a hatchling, and otherwise appeared to have developed fully and normally. They appeared to have died shortly before their discovery since there was no noticeable odor or other evidence of decomposition. The presence of a large (>30 cm diameter) fire ant mound about 1 m from the nest indicates that the ants were in close proximity to the nest during a substantial segment of the incubation period. A number of empty eggshells and two intact infertile eggs were found at the site, indicating that some hatchlings may have successfully emerged from this nest. I thank Larry Zorns for companionship in the field.

Submitted by **J. STEVEN CONNERS**, Animal Science Department, Miami Metrozoo, 12400 SW 152nd Street, Miami, Florida 33177, USA.

ERETMOCHELYS IMBRICATA (Hawksbill). **PREDATION.** Necropsy of an immature female hawksbill, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, found stranded in the Florida Keys suggest that shark attack was the ultimate cause of death. The turtle had been found stranded at the furthest point south of Old Boca Chica Road on Boca Chica Key in Monroe County, Florida, USA (24°33'N, 81°41'W). It was stored frozen at the Department of Environmental Protection in St. Petersburg, Florida, until the necropsy in February 1997. The necropsy revealed that the turtle was an immature female (66.8 cm SCL). Upon dissection, deep wounds consistent with shark attack were observed. The tail and posterior marginal scutes along the right side of the carapace were missing as a result of the shark bite, and the right rear flipper was severed. Puncture marks from the attack also appeared on the left rear flipper. The bites of the shark penetrated the body cavity through the abdominal muscles. Shark bite marks on the posterior body portion suggest that the turtle may have been hiding under a coral shelf or attempting to flee its predator when attacked (e.g., Bustard 1983. In Harless and Morlock [eds.], *Turtles: Perspectives and Research*, pp. 234–235). The shark bites appeared to have led to an internal infection in the body cavity, evident from necrotic tissue found in the posterior third of the body. The infection of the tissues implies that the proximate cause of death of the animal was the persistent internal infection, rather than the shark attack itself.

Sharks are known predators of hawksbills, but their impact on hawksbill populations is unknown (Witzell 1983. *FAO Fish. Sinop.* 137, Rome, p. 77). Young (1992. *Marine Turtle Newsletter* 59:14) reports remains of a “dinner-plate” sized hawksbill found in the stomach of a tiger shark, *Galeocerado cuvier*, in the Miskito Keys. A juvenile hawksbill was recently found in the stomach of *G. cuvier* in the western Atlantic Ocean (Gasparini and Sazima 1995. *Herpetol. Rev.* 26:34). My observation is notable because of the large size of the attack victim and because the hawksbill appears to have died from the infection following the attack.

Submitted by **LAURA K. ESTEP**, Natural Sciences Collegium, Eckerd College, 4200 54th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida, 33711, USA.

TERRAPENE ORNATA ORNATA (Ornate Box Turtle). **DIET.** There are several reports of *Terrapene ornata* feeding on the carcasses of mammals (Metcalf and Metcalf 1970. *Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci.* 73:96–117), birds (Blair 1976. *Southwest. Nat.* 21:89–103), and even other box turtles (Legler 1960. *Univ. Kansas Publ., Mus. Nat. Hist.* 11:527–669). Here I report the first published observation of an ornate box turtle eating snake carrion. On 13 August 1997, between 1300 and 1400 h, a sudden thunderstorm moved through the area of Valentine National Wildlife Refuge in Cherry Co., Nebraska, USA. Immediately after the storm I was driving east on Hwy 16B spur from the refuge headquarters to Hwy 83, a 13 mile stretch, and I observed numerous DOR and live reptiles on the still wet pavement. In particular, I observed a *T. o. ornata* on the south side of the road chewing on the exposed viscera of a DOR *Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*. I interrupted this scavenging episode when I stopped the car and approached the scene in order to identify the carcass.

I thank Fredric J. Janzen, Brian E. Smith, and Carrie L. Milne for reviewing this note.

Submitted by **JASON J. KOLBE**, Department of Zoology and Genetics, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, USA.

TRACHEMYS GAIGEAEE (Big Bend Slider). **COURTSHIP BEHAVIOR.** Male courtship in *Trachemys gaigeae* has not been described in detail, although Ernst (1992, *Cat. Amer. Amphib. Rept.* 538:3) noted that it does not involve foreclaw titillation but rather pursuit from the rear and possible biting by the male. Herein we provide preliminary observations of courtship in captive *T. gaigeae*.

Adult *T. gaigeae* were collected in Socorro and Sierra counties, New Mexico, and Brewster Co., Texas, USA. Three males (137–163 mm straight-line carapace length, SCL) and two females (216 and 224 mm SCL) were maintained in an outdoor artificial pond (610 cm diam. x 78 cm deep) or were housed in pairs for 3–4 days at a time in an aquarium (61 x 37 x 31 cm) for close observation. Total observation time in both the pond and aquarium was ca. 40 h during 1996–97.

Typical pre-courtship behavior exhibited by males in the pond involved trailing of the female along the bottom and cloacal “sniffing.” This was quickly followed by the male approaching the female from the front or side (or rarely from above or beneath) with his head and neck fully extended and oriented towards the head of the female. When their heads were <5 cm apart, the male would initiate a rapid, jerky nodding or bobbing motion of his head (2–3 nods/sec). The nodding motion was accompanied by a simultaneous, less-pronounced, side-to-side “wagging” head motion. This