

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

McCoy, C. J. AND RICHARD C. VOGT. 1985.

Pseudemys alabamensis.***Pseudemys alabamensis* Baur
Alabama Red-bellied Turtle***Emys mobilensis* Holbrook, 1838:53 (part). See REMARKS.*Ptychemys mobiliensis*: Agassiz, 1857:433 (part). See REMARKS.*Pseudemys alabamensis* Baur, 1893:224. Type-locality, "Mobile bay, Ala." Holotype, U.S. Nat. Mus. 20966, adult male, collected by Gustave Kohn, 9 May 1885 (examined by authors).*Pseudemys rubriventris*: Siebenrock, 1909:469. Placed in synonymy.*Pseudemys rubriventris alabamensis*: Stejneger, 1938:173.*Pseudemys floridana mobiliensis*: Carr, 1938a:306-307 (part). See REMARKS.*Pseudemys alabamensis alabamensis*: Crenshaw, 1955:28. See REMARKS.*Chrysemys (Pseudemys) alabamensis*: McDowell, 1964:274.*Pseudemys (Ptychemys) alabamensis*: Ward, 1984:43.

- CONTENT. No subspecies are recognized.

- DEFINITION. *Pseudemys alabamensis* is a large, robust emydid turtle of the *Pseudemys rubriventris* group (*sensu* Carr and Crenshaw, 1957). Females reach a maximum carapace length of about 335 mm, males about 295 mm. The carapace is elongate-oval in outline with a slightly serrated posterior margin, and deep, with the highest point slightly anterior to the middle of the carapace. The carapace surface is sculptured with fine longitudinal ridges that become more numerous and prominent with age. The ground color of the carapace is brown to olive, with variable light and dark streaks and mottling, the most constant feature of which is a distinct light vertical bar on each pleural scute. Marginal scutes are smudged with black above and below. The plastron is either red, reddish orange, or reddish yellow. There is a variable amount of dark plastral pattern, originating on and extending laterally from the central seam. The ground color of head, neck and limbs is black, marked with lines of yellow to light orange. The sagittal head stripe usually joins the supratemporal stripes on the snout to form a prefrontal arrow. Adults, especially males, become melanistic with age. Old males may have soft parts and carapace completely black, and the reddish color of the plastron almost obscured by black vermiculations (Carr and Crenshaw, 1957:33).

The upper jaw has a deep central notch bordered by a strong cusp on each side, and the edge of the upper tomium is serrate. The mandible is serrate, bears a strong cusp at the tip, and is flat ventrally.

Hatchlings are more nearly circular in outline than adults, and the green carapace is conspicuously marked with yellow. The hatchling plastron is brilliant red-orange, with a variable central dark figure (Mount, 1975:285, fig. 319). Sexual dimorphism in adults is expressed in the greater carapace length and bulk of females, and the elongate foreclaws, longer tail, and greater tendency toward melanism in males.

- DESCRIPTIONS. General descriptions are in Crenshaw (1955), Carr and Crenshaw (1957), Ernst and Barbour (1972), and Mount (1975). Osteological features were described by McDowell (1964), and Ward (1984).

- ILLUSTRATIONS. Carr and Crenshaw (1957) published black and white photographs of the holotype. Ernst and Barbour (1972) included a color photograph and black and white photographs of an adult male, and photographs of the skull. Mount (1975) gave black and white photographs of an adult male and of plastral patterns of hatchlings. Pritchard (1979) and Behler and King (1979) published a color photograph of an adult male specimen. McDowell (1964) illustrated the skull with line drawings.

- DISTRIBUTION. Mobile Bay and tributary streams, Baldwin and Mobile counties, Alabama. The species is most abundant in quiet backwaters of upper Mobile Bay, in areas with dense beds of submerged vegetation. It does not occur, except as a straggler, in brackish water or the salt marsh areas of lower Mobile Bay.

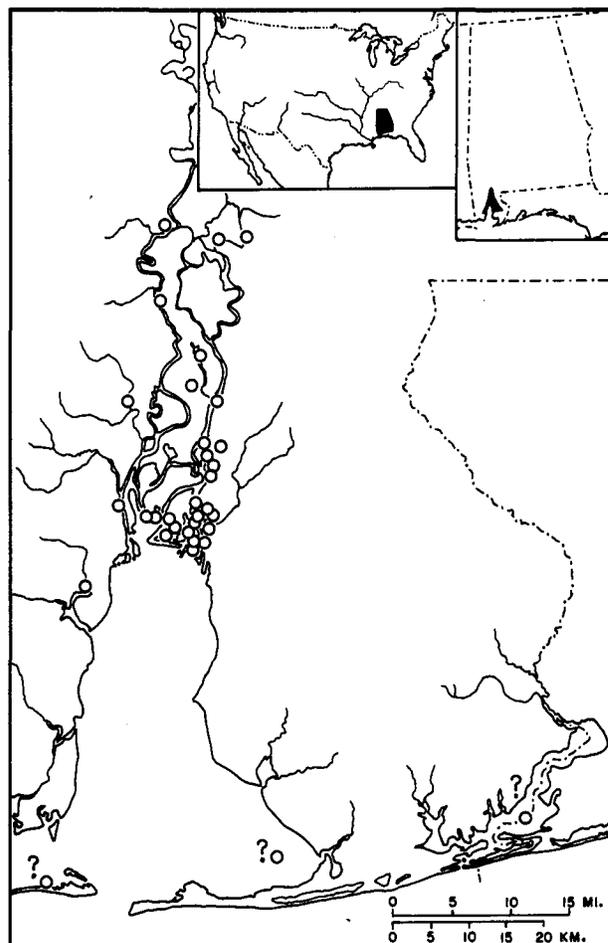
Although cited from Mississippi Sound by Loding (1922) and Haltom (1931), these records may be based on waifs such as that reported from Dauphin Island (Jackson and Jackson, 1970). Spec-

imens purportedly from Bon Secour Bay (Tulane Univ. 19723) and Perdido Bay (Tulane Univ. 19722) are from the Gustave Kohn collection, and may have been obtained in New Orleans fish markets with only "hearsay" locality data. A published record from the Tchoutacaboffa River, Harrison County, Mississippi (Allen, 1932) requires verification, but the specimen is not with Allen's collection in the American Museum of Natural History (R. G. Zweifel, pers. comm.). Records from the Florida Panhandle (Crenshaw, 1955; Carr and Crenshaw, 1957) were rejected by Mount (1975). Supposed *P. alabamensis* from Texas and Tennessee (Crenshaw, 1955; Carr and Crenshaw, 1957) have been reidentified as other species. A population that occurred in Little River State Park Lake, Monroe County, Alabama (Mount, 1975) no longer exists (R. H. Mount, pers. comm.). A specimen in the Senckenberg Museum (SMF 22218) bears the locality data "Biloxi, Mississippi," whence the species is otherwise unknown (C. H. Ernst, pers. comm.).

- FOSSIL RECORD. None.

- PERTINENT LITERATURE. The best account of the species is in Mount (1975). General reviews are in Pope (1939), and Ernst and Barbour (1972). Records from saltwater were reviewed by Viosca (1923) and Neill (1958), and Jackson and Ross (1974, 1975) reported barnacle and bryozoan attachment. Morphology and relationships were considered by Brimley (1907), Carr (1938a, 1938b, 1942), Crenshaw (1955), Carr and Crenshaw (1957), McDowell (1964), Rose and Weaver (1967), Weaver and Rose (1967), and Ward (1984). Meany (1979) reported nesting habits, and McCoy and Vogt (1979) reviewed distribution and population status.

- REMARKS. *Pseudemys mobilensis* of Holbrook (1838) and Agassiz (1857) were composites based in part upon *P. alabamensis*. From 1893 to 1955 *P. alabamensis* was one of the least-known



MAP. Circles indicate locality records, question marks indicate locality records probably based on waif captures. The type-locality ("Mobile bay") cannot be located precisely.

American turtles. It was rarely mentioned in the literature, and often confused with other species (De Sola, 1935; Carr, 1940). Carr (1938a:306) suggested that *P. alabamensis* is a variant ("mutant") of *P. floridana* that appears sporadically throughout the range of that species. Crenshaw (1955) revived *P. alabamensis* and established it as a valid species of the *rubriventris* group (Carr and Crenshaw, 1957). Earlier workers, among them Crenshaw, reported "*alabamensis*" from the Florida Panhandle, overlapping the range of *P. nelsoni*. Although the Florida records for *P. alabamensis* have been shown to be erroneous (Mount, 1975), the exact distribution of *rubriventris*-group turtles in the Florida Panhandle, and the relationships of *P. alabamensis* and *P. nelsoni*, deserve further study (Jackson, 1978).

● ETYMOLOGY. The name *alabamensis* refers to Alabama, the only state in which the species is known to occur.

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