

A Record of the Alligator Snapping Turtle, *Macrolemys temmincki* (Testudines: Chelydridae), in Kansas

ROBERT F. CLARKE

Division of Biological Sciences, Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas 66801

ABSTRACT

Description of a record of *Macrolemys temmincki* in the Cottonwood River at Emporia, Kansas, is given, with comments on the occurrence of the turtle in the state.

There are only two records, with accompanying preserved remains, of the occurrence of the alligator snapping turtle, *Macrolemys temmincki*, in Kansas, according to Collins (1974); one from the Arkansas River in Cowley County and the other from the Neosho River drainage in Lyon County. The Lyon County record has never been described; this note gives details on the specimen.

On February 21, 1967, two young men, Rick Christie and J. M. McDaniel, found a large alligator snapping turtle in the Cottonwood River at Emporia. It was at the shore, just below Soden's Dam at the south end of Commercial Street. The turtle was dead and beginning to decompose. The skull and shell were salvaged and placed in the vertebrate museum at Emporia State University, cataloged as H2237. The specimen, a male, weighed 54 pounds, has a carapace length of 55.8 cm, carapace width of 44.1 cm, and plastron length of 36.0 cm.

Conversations with local fishermen over the years reveal that they can distinguish between two kinds of snapping turtles they catch in the Cottonwood River. One, to which they apply the appellation "mossy back," is described as a large snapping turtle with a pronounced beak and prominent carapace ridges, as distinct from other large, rather smooth-shelled snappers. Thus, the alligator snapping turtle, although not often in collections, apparently does turn up occasionally on fishing lines. Its predilection for bottoms of large, deeper water courses keeps it from discovery through conventional collecting techniques.

Hall and Smith (1947) reported seven separate collections of the alligator snapping turtle from the Neosho River in Cherokee County and one from Neosho County. One specimen was taken from the Cottonwood River in

Chase County and two from the Arkansas River drainage in Butler and Sedgwick Counties. There were skeletal remains of some of these at one time, but a number of the records are from the latter part of the past century, and, apparently, the specimens have been lost. This turtle should be expected in any of the main channels of the Cottonwood-Neosho system, as well as large streams which make up the Arkansas River drainage.

LITERATURE CITED

- Collins, J. T. 1974. Amphibians and reptiles in Kansas. Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist. Publ. Ed. Ser. 1:1-283.
- Hall, H. H., and H. M. Smith. 1947. Selected records of reptiles and amphibians from southeastern Kansas. Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci. 49(4):447-454.