

IS THE FLORIDA BOX TORTOISE A DISTINCT SPECIES?

By EINAR LÖNNBERG.

IN MY "Notes on Reptiles and Batrachians collected in Florida in 1892 and 1893,"¹ I recorded *Terrapene carolina* (Linnaeus) among the Testudinata of my collection. Recently this form was divided into several "species," and from Florida a "new species" was described under the name of *Terrapene bauri*, Taylor.² It is therefore natural that I should be curious to learn to which of the six North American "species" my Florida specimen belonged, and for that reason I re-examined a skeleton of a specimen caught not far from Apopka, Orange County, Florida. It seems that two of the most important characters are osteological, namely, first, presence and different development or absence of the zygomatic arch; second, number of phalanges of fingers and toes. Hence one ought to be able to classify a skeleton without difficulty. My specimen had the hind limb with only three clawed digits and would thus, according to Taylor, be *T. bauri*, or *T. mexicana*, or *T. triunguis*. The number of the phalanges on the fore foot are 2, 3, 3, 3, 2, and on the hind foot 2, 3, 3, 2, 1 (0?). This indicates *T. bauri*, but *T. bauri* should have a complete zygomatic arch, and my specimen has none. In fact, there is not the slightest rudiment left of any quadratejugal, so that in this respect my specimen agrees with *T. ornata*, a species with four clawed digits on the hind limb and quite different number of phalanges (fore foot, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2; hind foot, 2, 3, 3, 3, 1). The osteological characters of this Florida specimen are therefore not identical with those of any hitherto described "species." Still I do not wish to create a new one. The color of my specimen corresponds very closely to that of *T. bauri*.³ The ground color of the carapace is dark brown with yellow keel, yellow radiating lines with a few spots of the same color. The plastron is yellow with mostly transverse, brown markings. The length of carapace is 165 mm.

It would appear that Taylor established the species *T. bauri* on only one specimen. Under such circumstances the following possibilities

¹Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XVII, 1894, pp. 317-339.

²W. E. TAYLOR: The box tortoises of North America, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XVII, 1894, pp. 573-588.

³ *T. bauri* and *ornata* resemble each other in color.

can be considered: (1) *T. bauri*, Taylor, and my specimen belong to the same species, although one of the specimens is anomalous; or (2) they belong to different varieties; or (3) one of them is a hybrid form. The first supposition seems rather improbable, for if the one specimen has a zygomatic arch one must expect to find at least rudiments of a quadratojugal in the other. On the other hand, it would be strange if two different forms of this genus lived in the same region but were not known outside of that territory. Or are perhaps all the forms of *Terrapene* only local varieties? This opinion seems, however, now to be abandoned by most zoologists since Boulenger lately accepted as species five North American forms of this genus.¹ With the material now at command, the nature of the Florida form can not be decided, but I have thought it desirable to point out the differences in my Florida specimen and to call the attention of American zoologists to the box tortoise of Florida, and at the same time add a little to the knowledge of the variations of this genus.

¹ Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., 6 ser., XV, 1895, pp. 330–331, namely: *major*, Agassiz, *mexicana*, Gray, *cinosternoides*, Gray (=older name for this form than *triunguis*, Agassiz), *carolina* (Linnaeus), and *ornata*, Agassiz, from Yucatan—*yucatana*.