



false map turtle

Graptemys pseudogeographica

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Reptilia
Order: Testudines
Family: Emydidae

Features

The female false map turtle ranges from five to 10 3/4 inches long, while the male is about 3 1/2 to 7 3/4 inches long. It has yellow boomerang-shaped or L-shaped markings just behind the eyes and yellow lines on the head, neck, legs, and tail. The brown, olive, or tan carapace (upper shell) appears oval from above. The center of the carapace, the keel (ridge), has spikes and the back of the carapace has projections like the teeth of a saw. This turtle has webbed toes and the male has very long toenails on the front feet. There are two subspecies of false map turtles in Iowa (false map turtle and the Ouachita map turtle). Most of Iowa's turtles appear to be intergrades, showing some features of both subspecies. The false map turtle has four to seven neck stripes reaching the eye while the Ouachita map turtle has three. The Ouachita map turtle has two yellow spots, one below the eye and another below the angle of the jaw.

Natural History

The false map turtle lives in large rivers and lakes. It eats mostly plants and insects along with mollusks (snails, slugs, and others),

crayfish, and worms. It basks in the sun on logs or other objects at the water's edge. It may remain active in the winter months, but normally will bury itself in mud for the duration of the coldest weather. Mating occurs in spring. The female digs a nest in soil some distance from the water, depositing 10 to 16 eggs. Eggs hatch in late July to September. The Ouachita map turtle and intergrades dominate the Mississippi River population while the false map turtle subspecies is more common in the Missouri River population.

Habitats

Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

eastern third of Iowa and western edge

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.