

STRIPED MUD TURTLE (LOWER KEYS)

Kinosternon baurii, Lower Keys population

(considered in past, and still by some, to be distinct subspecies, *K. b. baurii*)

Order:	Testudines
Family:	Kinosternidae
FNAIRanks:	G5T2Q/S2
U.S. Status:	None
FL Status:	Endangered (applies only to striped mud turtles in the Lower Florida Keys)



© Richard D. Bartlett

Description: A small, dark, aquatic turtle with a somewhat oval to elongate shell that reaches a maximum of 4 in. (100 mm). The three light dorsal stripes characteristic of the species are barely evident in this race and may be obscured entirely, leaving upper shell (carapace) nearly plain brown. Head relatively large and usually with a pair of narrow yellowish stripes on each side. Lower shell (plastron) yellowish-orange to brown, with two moveable hinges and often with distinct growth rings.



© Bill Keogh

STRIPED MUD TURTLE (LOWER KEYS)

Kinosternon baurii, Lower Keys population

Similar Species: Although neither of two very similar species, the eastern mud turtle (*Kinosternon subrubrum*) and common musk turtle or stinkpot (*Sternotherus odoratus*), occurs naturally in Florida Keys, individuals might be present as a result of release. Both are similar in size and coloration to Keys mud turtle. Eastern mud turtle has mottled pattern rather than stripes on head. Plastron of stinkpot is narrower, especially the rear lobe, often has fleshy skin along seams between scales, and bears only a single hinge.

Habitat: Small, usually temporary, freshwater to slightly brackish ponds and ditches with salinity below 15 parts per thousand, roughly circumneutral in acidity. Most natural ponds are at edges of hardwood hammocks and have buttonwood (*Conocarpus*) fringes, but sometimes large populations occupy man-made mosquito-control ditches. Uses terrestrial retreats (rock ledges, tree roots) when ponds dry or become too saline due to evaporation.

Seasonal Occurrence: Active year-round in water below about 15 ppt; however, see Habitat regarding terrestrial activity. Nesting begins in late winter or early spring.

Florida Distribution: Although striped mud turtles also occur throughout Florida peninsula and Upper and Middle Keys, only those populations occurring in Lower Keys, from west of the Seven Mile Bridge to Key West, are protected.

Range-wide Distribution: Species extends northward in Atlantic coastal states as far as Virginia.

Conservation Status: Though several populations occur on federal lands within national wildlife refuges, some of the largest occur on private lands threatened by development.

Protection and Management: Protection of hardwood hammocks and all associated wetlands in the Lower Keys is critical. Although filling of mosquito-control ditches has been proposed in conjunction with management of the Key deer, this would destroy some of the mud turtle's most important habitat. Monitor controlled burning if conducted during dry season, when turtles are buried on land and might be affected.

Selected References: Ashton and Ashton 1991, Bartlett and Bartlett 1999, Conant and Collins 1991, Ernst et al. 1994, Lazell 1989, Moler (ed.) 1992.