BARBOUR'S MAP TURTLE
Graptemys barbouri

Order: Testudines
Family: Emydidae
FNAI Ranks: G2/S2
U.S. Status: none
FL Status: Threatened

Description: Young and male map turtles are readily identified by series of spines on raised keel along middle of back. In Graptemys barbouri, spines are reduced to knobs in adult females, which grow considerably larger (to 11 in. = 280 mm shell length) than males (to 6 in. = 152 mm) and develop massive heads for crushing mollusks. Shell of both sexes gray to olive above, sometimes with a fine yellow-orange ring or C on each scale, and pale yellow below. Upper surface of each marginal scute bears conspicuous, curved yellow bar. Large light-colored blotch between eyes tapers forward to point over nose, often contains central dark heart-shaped figure, and usually connects to large light-colored blotch behind each eye. Light yellow bar crosses or sometimes parallels curve of chin below lower jaw; neck lined with many yellow stripes.

Similar Species: Barbour's and Escambia map turtles (*Graptemys ernsti*; see species account) differ in fine details of color pattern on head and carapace but remain difficult to distinguish; surest method is to base identification upon river of origin, as the two have non-overlapping ranges. The spines or knobs along backs of map turtles readily distinguish them from other non-hatchling freshwater turtles in Florida.

Habitat: Rivers, large streams, and impoundments, usually favoring areas with good flow and avoiding backwaters. Nesting occurs along sand bars, river berms, and spoil mounds.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present year-round, but basking individuals are more conspicuous from mid-spring through fall. Females nest from late spring to early summer.

Florida Distribution: Once thought to be endemic to the Apalachicola River system, the species is now known from four river systems: principally the Apalachicola

(including Chipola) River plus associated impoundments, but also the Choctawhatchee, Ochlockonee, and Aucilla (Wacissa) river systems. Pleistocene fossils from the Santa Fe River (Suwannee drainage) are similar but may have represented a closely related species (Ehret and Bourque 2011).

Range-wide Distribution: Extends northward in Apalachicola River system in both Chattahoochee and Flint rivers of Alabama and Georgia, and has been recorded in southern Alabama in Pea River (Choctawhatchee drainage).

Conservation Status: Much of the Apalachicola River floodplain, and some of Choctawhatchee and Ochlockonee rivers, are public lands. However, water quality of all three rivers is threatened by pollution, particularly from Georgia and Alabama. Annual dredging of Apalachicola for barge traffic degrades habitat both for turtles and for mussels and other animals upon which turtle feeds.

Protection and Management: Maintain water quality and quantity as well as natural ecosystem integrity of inhabited rivers, especially the Apalachicola River system. Eliminate or at least limit all sources of water pollution in these rivers. Additionally, avoid dredging, channelization, impoundment, and removal of snags.

References: Ashton and Ashton 1991, Bartlett and Bartlett 1999, Conant and Collins 1991, Ehrert and Bourque 2011, Ernst et al. 1994, Georgia DNR 1999, Moler (ed.) 1992, Mount 1975.

Barbour's Map Turtle ***Graptemys barbouri***

© Dale Jackson

juvenile © John B. Jensen

Barbour's Map Turtle ***Graptemys barbouri***

female © Dale R. Jackson