

Ouachita map turtle *Graptemys ouachitensis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Family: Emydidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

A female Ouachita map turtle averages five to 10 and three-fourths inches long while the male is about three and one-half to five and three-fourths inches long. This turtle has a square or rectangular yellow spot behind each eye and two more below each eye. Its brown carapace (upper shell) has a keel (ridge) in the center with small knobs. The back edge of the carapace has projections like the teeth of a saw. The male's front feet have very long toenails. The head, neck and tail of the Ouachita map turtle have yellow stripes.

BEHAVIORS

The Ouachita map turtle lives in rivers, sloughs and lakes, particularly where the bottom is muddy and plants are present. This turtle 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 the mud for the duration of the coldest weather. Mating occurs in spring. The female digs a nest in soil some distance from the water. Ten to 16 eggs are deposited that hatch in mid- to late-July. This turtle eats mollusks (snails, slugs and others), crayfish, worms, snails, plants and insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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