

Herpetologists' League

Sounding Turtles: A Field Locating Technique

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all the upper parts, and light ventral surfaces. Some of the adults have a darker blue gray head instead of the light brown of the holotype, but all show at least traces of spotting. The distance between dark shoulder patches varies and is in one or two cases very indistinct.

Comparisons. Specimens of all Mexican subspecies of *Sceloporus malachiticus* have been available for comparison. *Sceloporus m. internasalis* may be distinguished from *salvini* by its lack of a complete nuchal collar or a collar separated by only one scale row, a much lower dorsal scale count, and supraoculars in a single row. It differs from *acanthinus* by having no supraoculars in contact with the median head scales, no broad, nearly complete nuchal collar, and median frontonasal not in contact with lateral frontonasals. It may be separated from *taenioconemnis* by its lower dorsal scale count, and supraoculars in one instead of two rows. *Sceloporus m. internasalis* differs from all in having the internasal area broken up into small rounded scales, and two rows of scales between nasals and rostral (also between nasals and labials).

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MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY,
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SOUNDING TURTLES: A FIELD LOCATING TECHNIQUE.—

The following technique was developed at the Oliver Wildlife Preserve of the University of Oklahoma. Those who have searched for box turtles, are aware of their habit of hiding under piles of sticks and leaves, or of digging forms in the soft earth. In searching for reptiles on the preserve, I customarily carry a beating-stick so that individuals can be flushed from a larger area. When working in thicket areas, I began to use this stick to prod the masses of leaves and debris caught at the bases of bushes and briar, in tree roots, washes or small hollows. I quickly discovered that if a turtle was present, the stick striking the carapace made a hollow sound easily discernible from that of a piece of wood or stone. This stick was later replaced by a more efficient cane-like rod of aluminum tubing tapered to a blunt point.

With the approach of cool weather in the fall, the turtles became less and less active as they entered hibernation. This "sounding" rod continued to be very effective in locating the turtles down to their usual depth of six to ten inches beneath the debris or soil (some "sounded" up to twenty inches). Searches were continued throughout the winter using this method, and during this time more than one hundred individual turtles were found in their hibernacula.

This method was effective in locating all five species of turtles known to be on the preserve: *Terrapene carolina triunguis*, *Terrapene ornata*, *Kinosternon f. flavescens*, *Chelydra s. serpentina*, and *Pseudemys scripta elegans*.

This turtle "sounding" technique offers an effective method of locating turtles resting, aestivating, or in hibernation, when they are covered by debris in their forms or buried deep in the ground.—Charles C. Carpenter, Department of Zoology, University of Oklahoma, Norman.