

Alabama Red-bellied Turtle

ARBT12142016

DESCRIPTION: The Alabama red-bellied turtle (*Pseudemys alabamensis*) is also known as the red-belly turtle. It is a large freshwater, herbivorous turtle that grows up to about 13 inches in length. The top of the shell (carapace) is usually olive, greenish, brown, or black with cream, yellow, orange, or red markings. The elongated carapace is highly arched and elevated along the midline. The bottom (plastron) is usually red or orange with dark markings. The head and legs are dark with yellow striping; the front toenails are long and sharp. A prominent notch is located at the top of the upper jaw and bordered on each side by a tooth-like cusp.



Habitat is primarily shallow, fresh and brackish vegetated backwaters of the lower Mobile-Tensaw River Delta in Alabama and areas within the Biloxi and Pascagoula River watersheds of southeast Mississippi. Gravine Island and the Mobile Bay causeway (US 98) are two sites utilized for nesting. Nest predation is a factor that limits nesting success on Gravine Island. A chain link fence constructed along approximately 3.4 miles of the Mobile Bay causeway that separates the Mobile-Tensaw delta from Mobile Bay has dramatically decreased vehicle caused turtle mortality.

It was [listed as an endangered species](#) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 6-16-1987. A [recovery plan](#) was developed in 1990 for this species but the latest 5-year review states that the plan and recovery criteria are in the beginning stages of being revised.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Adherence to Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry and following herbicide labels will protect the water habitat of this turtle.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: Current information suggests that distribution in Alabama is limited to Mobile and Baldwin counties. At one time, it was known to occur as far north as the lake in Little River State Park in southern Monroe County. The Biloxi and Pascagoula Rivers and their associated watersheds appear to represent the current distribution of the species in Mississippi.

Photo Credit: Robert H. Mount

Text Credit: Threatened and Endangered Species of Alabama: A Guide to Assist with Forestry Activities, Second Edition, USFWS



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission
For more information, please visit: www.forestry.alabama.gov