



# Rare Animals of Louisiana

## Ringed Map Turtle *Graptemys oculifera*

Federal Status: Threatened (December 23, 1986)  
State Status: Threatened (December 20, 1989)

**Rarity Rank:** S2/G2

### Identification:

- Background carapace color dark olive brown with a broad yellow to reddish ring on the costal scutes.
- Head conspicuously marked with a large yellow spot behind each eye, 2 yellow stripes radiating backward from the eyes, and a mostly yellow lower jaw.
- Prominent dorsal spines in juveniles and males, less so in adult females.
- Relatively small turtle; carapace length in adult males 8-10 cm, adult females 12-22 cm (4.7-8.6 in).



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### Habitat:

- Generally inhabits clean rivers having a moderate current, an open canopy, and numerous nesting beaches and basking logs.
- Ideal nesting beaches are islands composed of clean, fine-grain sand, with a minimum of vegetative cover and a minimum elevation of 1—3 m (3.3-9.8 ft) above river level.

**Food Habits:** Feeds primarily on insects although small fish, mollusks and carrion are also consumed.

**Reproduction:** Males mature at approximately 3-5 years of age, females at 10-16 years of age. Females nest during the day generally producing 1-2 clutches of 3-4 eggs annually.

### Threats:

- Natural and man-made changes in river hydrology, which decreases availability of exposed sandbars
- Lower water quality also decreases the food supply
- Collecting for the pet trade
- Illegal point-bar mining
- Loss of basking and foraging sites through snag removal

### Beneficial Management Practices:

- Follow Best Management Practices for Streamside Management Zones
- Protect stream from clearing and snagging to maintain basking logs
- Protect exposed sandbars



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## ***U. S. Range:*** LA, MS

- Endemic to the Pearl and Bogue Chitto River drainages in Louisiana and Mississippi
- In Louisiana, this species is relatively uncommon south of Bogalusa in the Pearl River and has been seen as far upstream as Franklinton in the Bogue Chitto River.

## ***Conservation Efforts:***

- Surveys of potential habitat for the species
- Protection of occupied habitat from dredging and other activities that alter water quality and exposed sandbars



## ***References:***

NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2006. Version 6.1. Arlington, Virginia, USA: NatureServe. Available: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: Mar. 28, 2007).

Shively, S.H. No date. 1999 survey of the ringed map turtle (*Graptemys oculifera*) in the Bogue Chitto River, Louisiana. Unpublished report, Louisiana Natural Heritage Program and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.