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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Ouachita Map Turtle

Graptemys ouachitensis

Graptemys ouachitensis is a diurnal, medium-sized freshwater turtle from rivers and lakes in the Mississippi drainage of the USA. The female reaches up to about 26 cm and the male about 18 cm, and the species has a broad yellow mark behind the eye. The species is shy and needs a large, clean, well-oxygenated aquatic enclosure with a basking area and strong UVB, so it suits experienced keepers best.

Family: Emydidae Former name: *Graptemys pseudogeographica ouachitensis*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**9-26 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-30 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Wetland**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**130 × 65 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Basking spot	**30-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 30-40 cm
Water temperature	**22-26 °C**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects, complete diet, plants, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24-84 months**
Clutch size	**6-16 eggs**
Clutches per year	**2-3**
Incubation	**60-82 days** at 26-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix III**
EU annex	**Annex C**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about the care of *Graptemys ouachitensis* specifically.
TEMPERATURE	The surface of the basking spot should be 30-35 °C, measured with an IR thermometer a couple of hours after the lamps are switched on. Use a halogen lamp in a deep dome with a ceramic fitting, and place it close to the UVB tube.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Air humidity matters little for an aquatic turtle; 50-80% in the room is suitable. What is decisive is the cleanliness of the water: the species is sensitive, and dirty or oxygen-poor water causes fungal infections of the shell.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The water is the animal's living space, so it must be deep, clean, well-oxygenated and warm. The water depth is 30-40 cm for adult animals, and the temperature is 22-26 °C (see Temperature). Deep water gives a shy species security.
LIGHTING AND UVB	UVB is necessary: the species is diurnal and basks for many hours a day, and zone 3 is suitable.
FEEDING	*Graptemys ouachitensis* is omnivorous and eats only in the water.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Graptemys ouachitensis* is shy and sensitive and dives at the slightest disturbance. It is not an animal to be handled: it is easily stressed and can bite when it feels threatened. Feeding with tongs is the gentlest contact.
NATIVE RANGE	United States.