



About Our Cover

This issue's cover features a photo of *Graptemys versa*, the Texas map turtle, a sexually dimorphic species in which males average 9 cm in carapace length and females 15 cm. A beautifully marked chelonian in the family Emydidae, it is readily identified by the orange spots below the posterior end of the jaw and yellow plastron. *Graptemys versa* is associated with lotic ecosystems of the Colorado River drainage. Mating begins with the male stroking the female along her head with his elongated nails in a bizarre, yet romantic, courtship. Unlike most other aquatic turtles, this species typically does not travel great distances from water to lay its eggs. Once the young hatch, they must make the short but perilous journey back to the water on their own. The diet of this species changes as the individual ages. Young animals are primarily carnivorous, feeding mainly on insects and small fish. Mature individuals are herbivores. This adult male was captured in the San Saba river in Menard County, Texas, and photographed with a Canon PowerShot D10 during midday, June 2011. The turtle was marked using a Dremel tool and released back into its habitat as part of a research project. Turtles throughout the world are under threat because of habitat destruction, collection for the pet trade, and collection for food and medicinal purposes. The goal of this study is to figure out basic population dynamics to help the Texas Parks and Wildlife department determine proper regulations for native turtle species. Andrew Brinker, the photographer, is an AP Biology teacher at Paschal High School in Fort Worth (e-mail: andrew.brinker@fwisd.org). He has helped Carl J. Franklin of the University of Texas at Arlington as a summer field assistant.

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