

## A Simple Method for Opening the Turtle Plastron

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Carefully executed, this method produces a clear, near-bloodless field which is a particular advantage in the study of the heart and associated structures. It was successfully employed on 36 animals used in an electrocardiographic study of *Pseudemys scripta elegans* conducted under the direction of Professor C. A. Levengood, chairman of the Department of Sciences at the University of Tulsa.

The materials required included a 1 and  $\frac{3}{8}$ " circular steel drill saw, two pieces of 12" x 12" x  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood and four adjustable bolts.

The animal is clamped between the two boards and held firmly in place by the bolts placed at the corners of the holding boards. The plastron surface of the animal is exposed through a 1 and  $\frac{3}{8}$ " guide hole in the top holding board. The guide hole is positioned so that the larger portion of the abdominal plate is in view with the top portion of the guide hole just encompassing the margin of the pectoral plate. After the animal is secured, the drill is inserted into the guide hole. The drilling must be done with care, and the plastron usually requires several cleanings during the drilling process. The appearance of a bluish-gray tint in the drilling well indicates that drilling should cease. After the disc is removed by using a sharp scalpel, the connective tissue of the viscera may be dissected away disclosing the heart and the associated area.

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