

# New Records for the Alligator Snapping Turtle in Southeastern Oklahoma

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During the past half-century, it is probable that there has been a drastic decline in alligator snapping turtles (*Macrochelys temminckii*) in southeastern Oklahoma (Glass 1949, Heck 1998, Riedle et al 2005). Few of these turtles are now found in this area, and reports are rare. This note documents three new records for this turtle.

On 28 June 2005, R. Bill Webb of Idabel, McCurtain County, told me that, in late March 2000, he observed two fishermen with a large alligator snapping turtle that had been hooked in a front foot on a trotline baited with perch in Walnut Bayou 5.0 km south of Tom, McCurtain County. The fishermen were planning to kill it, so Webb purchased the turtle, which weighed 46.3 kg on a cotton scale, and returned it unharmed to the creek.

On 27 June 2005, Brad Phillips of Garvin, McCurtain County, told me that, on 17 May 2005, he and Chance Phillips caught an alligator snapping turtle (Fig. 1) on a trotline set overnight using 5/0 hooks baited with live perch. The turtle was caught in the Glover River 0.5 km upstream from the junction with the Little River, 8.0 km north of Garvin. The river at this location is approximately 2.0 m deep with many submerged limbs and trees. The turtle weighed 31.8 kg on a livestock scale, and the carapace was approximately 60.0 cm in length (based on my observation of a photograph of the turtle in which a measuring tape was stretched from its nose to its tail). This turtle, which had been hooked in the upper jaw, was released 18 May, unharmed, back into the river.



**Fig. 1.** Turtle caught by Brad and Chance Phillips (photo courtesy Valliant Ledger).

On 8 July 2005, I measured a mounted alligator snapping turtle displayed at a store in Rattan, Pushmataha County. The carapace measured 53.7 cm x 46.3 cm. On 9 July, Billy Arpealer Jr. of Antlers, McCurtain County, told me that he and Jimmy Kellett had captured the turtle in about 1990 in the Kiamichi River, 6.5 km east of Antlers, Pushmataha County, at the mouth of the Big Cedar Creek by using a snag hook on the bottom at about 2.4 m depth. The turtle weighed 40.8 kg.

## REFERENCES

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