Catalog Of Type Specimens Of Extant Turtles And Crocodilians In The National Museum Of Natural History

By

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Holotype of *Terrapene nelsoni*
USNM 46252

Paratype of *Amyda spinifera hartwegi*
USNM 123446

Paratype of *Malaclemmys macrospilota*
USNM 33919

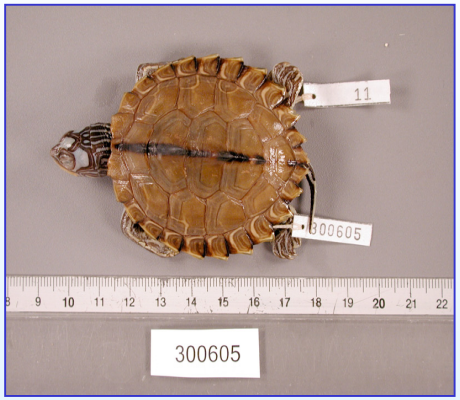
The concept of name-bearing types is one of the underlying principles upon which the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (1999) is based. Every scientific name within the scope of the Code is permanently attached to a name-bearing type. For species and subspecies, this name-bearing type is a single specimen or a group of specimens that together constitute the name-bearer. The association of the name-bearing type to a taxon is the descriptive mechanism that ties the name to an objective reality (the specimen), providing an unambiguous standard of reference for the application of names in zoological nomenclature.

The first comprehensive listing of all type specimens of amphibians and reptiles in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) was done by Doris Cochran (Cochran 1961), a former curator in the then United States National Museum (USNM). That treatment dealt with 1,742 names of taxa. A large number of new taxa have been described and added to the National Collection of Amphibians and Reptiles, and new information on older type specimens has accumulated since Cochran's 1961 catalog. We estimate that there are around 2,900 names of taxa and more than 13,000 specimens in the amphibian and reptile type collection. The large number of specimens of amphibians and reptiles in the NMNH type collections and the diversity and geographic coverage of taxa represented make it unwieldy to produce a comprehensive listing of all type specimens, as was done by Cochran. Rather, a decision was made that type catalogs for subunits (Orders) of the collection would be more manageable. We have started working on an annotated catalog of the type specimens of extant turtles and crocodilians. Cochran's catalog included 63 turtle and crocodilian taxa. Currently there are 91 taxa of turtles and crocodilians represented by 244 specimens in the National Collection.

The new catalog project involves determining which specimens actually are types, as well as their current status and taxonomic identity (see sample account). All original citations are being researched, including actual publication dates, and any controversial or contradictory data about particular specimens discussed. We also are including available information pertaining to lost or destroyed type specimens, as well as the current status and museum numbers for USNM type specimens that were exchanged with other institutions. Descriptions of certain older species were based on turtles housed in the National Museum prior to 1856, before the practice of individually tagging specimens began. As a result, these specimens often require a significant amount of detective work to confirm or dispute their type status.

Type specimens of turtles and crocodilians currently present in the USNM are being measured, sexed, and digitally photographed for this project. In addition to their value in documenting taxonomic vouchers, the photographs also will provide a visual record of specimen condition and will be useful for future evaluation of conservation practices. Eventually the digital images will be linked to specimen records in the catalog database and made available to researchers throughout the world.

In addition to publishing a hard copy of the type catalog, we likely will produce an electronic version that will be available online and linked to the appropriate digital images and catalog records. We also are considering inclusion of digitized copies of original literature descriptions for each taxon. The electronic version could be easily updated with new type records or other information as they become available.



Paratype of *Graptemys ernesti*
USNM 300605

SAMPLE ACCOUNT

***Graptemys ernsti* Lovich and McCoy 1992:300**
[= *Graptemys ernsti* Lovich and McCoy 1992:300]
Lovich, Jeffrey E. and C. Jack McCoy. 1992. Review of the *Graptemys pulchra* group (Reptilia: Testudines: Emydidae), with descriptions of two new species. Annals of the Carnegie Museum, 61(4):293-315. (p. 300, Figures 4 and 5).
Paratypes: USNM 300604 (alcoholic adult male, CL 84 mm), and USNM 300605 (alcoholic male, CL 62 mm); collected at the type locality by Jeffrey E. Lovich, Anthony M. Mills and Joshua Schachter of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, 29 September 1988, donated by C. Jack McCoy, 1992.
Type Locality: "Conecuh River, 1 mile upstream from County Road 4 Bridge, 14 km east of East Brewton, Escambia County, Alabama, USA."
Other Type Material: Holotype: CM 122408. Paratypes CM 122403-07, 12409-11.
Etymology: The name *ernsti* is a patronym honoring North American herpetologist, Dr. Carl H. Ernst, for his contributions to the study of turtles.

LITERATURE CITED

Cochran, D. M. 1961. Type specimens of reptiles and amphibians in the U. S. National Museum. Bulletin 220, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 291 pp.

International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. Fourth Edition. 1999. International Trust Zoological Nomenclature, The Natural History Museum, London. 306 pp.