

Department of Biology and Chemistry
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Field Notes: *Clemmys guttata*

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Clemmys guttata (Spotted Turtle). VA: Accomack Co., Assateague Island, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, ca. 0.25 km SSE of Assateague Channel shoreline along main refuge road (ca. 40 m SSE of toll plaza). 2 June 2001. Timothy R. Brophy, Andrew Krivenko, and Diana Raichel.

According to Mitchell (1999. Checklist and keys to the amphibians and reptiles of Virginia's Eastern Shore. *Catesbeiana* 19:3-18), all herpetofaunal observations from Virginia's Eastern Shore should be reported to the scientific community, including those that contribute to a better understanding of distributional patterns. On 2 June 2001 at 1800 h, we found an adult spotted turtle in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague Island, Virginia. It was heading east across the main refuge road approximately 0.25 km SSE of the Assateague Channel shoreline (ca. 40 m SSE of toll plaza). The turtle was examined, photographed, and released on the side of the road to which it was heading. Carl H. Ernst verified identification and a color photograph has been deposited in the VHS archives at the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

Spotted turtles have been reported previously from Chincoteague and Assateague Islands. Fowler (1925. Records of amphibians and reptiles for Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Part 3, Virginia. *Copeia* 1925: 65-67) found *C. guttata* on Chincoteague Island in May 1912. Lee (1972. List of amphibians and reptiles of Assateague Island. *Bulletin of the Maryland Herpetological Society* 8:90-95) reported a single *C. guttata* sighting from the south end of Assateague Island in Spring 1971. Mitchell and Anderson (1994. Amphibians and Reptiles of Assateague and Chincoteague Islands. Virginia Museum of Natural History Special Publication 2, Martinsville, Virginia. 120 pp.) found one spotted turtle in the Maryland portion of Assateague Island National Seashore in May 1992. Most recently, Toadvine (2000. Comparison of six monitoring techniques for the reptiles and amphibians at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Unpublished M.S. thesis, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, Maryland) found *C. guttata* in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (Assateague Island) during 1999-2000. All of these reports are extremely brief (1-2 sentences each), lack specific locality/collection data, and make no reference to accompanying specimens or photographs.

Voucher specimens are extremely important to many types of biological studies. They are the only mechanism for validating the presence of a species in a study and for making historical comparisons (Reynolds, R. P., R. I. Crombie and R. W. McDiarmid. 1994. Voucher specimens. Pp. 66-71 *In* W. R. Heyer, M. A. Donnelly, R. W. McDiarmid, L. C. Hayek and M. S. Foster [eds.]. *Measuring and Monitoring Biological Diversity: Standard Methods for Amphibians*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.). In order to fulfill their function, vouchers must illustrate the recognized diagnostic traits of a species, be preserved in good condition, be documented with appropriate field data, be deposited and maintained in a suitable institution, and be readily accessible (Lee, W. L., B. M. Bell and J. F. Sutton. 1982. Guidelines for acquisition and management of biological specimens. Association of Systematics Collections, Lawrence, Kansas). The spotted turtle discussed above was found in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and could not, therefore, be legally collected. When undisputed reasons exist not to collect a voucher specimen, a good-quality photograph may serve as a substitute (Reynolds et al., op. cit.). For all the above reasons, our color photograph serves as a valid voucher. In fact, the spotted turtle reported here represents the first vouchered record for the Virginia portion of Assateague Island (Mitchell, J. C. 1994. *The Reptiles of Virginia*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 352 pp.; Mitchell, J. C. and K. K. Reay. 1999. *Atlas of Amphibians and Reptiles in Virginia*. Special Publication 1, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Richmond, Virginia. 122 pp.).

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