



# Turtles of Alabama (Gosse Nature Guides)

*Craig Guyer, Mark A. Bailey, Robert H. Mount*

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For nearly 200 million years, Earth has been occupied by reptiles—a lineage of terrestrial vertebrates that includes some, like birds, that have invaded the aerial environment, and others, like turtles, that have invaded aquatic environments. With thirty-nine known species, Alabama harbors more turtle species than any other state in the nation, and its Mobile River basin is the center of the world's greatest biodiversity in turtles, surpassing all other river systems around the globe, including the Amazon and the Nile. *Turtles of Alabama* documents that extraordinary wealth and presents each species in full, describing its physical appearance, habitat and range, behavior, conservation and management, and taxonomy.

In addition to providing sixty-five full-color photographs of juveniles and adults along with forty-two colorfully detailed distribution maps, this volume features an introductory section explaining the physiography, climate, and habitats of the state, and offers illustrated taxonomic keys for all the species considered, including the oceanic behemoths that lay their eggs on Alabama's gulf beaches and the lumbering gopher tortoise that provides safe haven for countless other animals and arthropods in its underground burrows of the Coastal Plain. With fine line drawings to highlight various distinguishing attributes of the animals, this volume is the definitive guide to the state's fascinating and diverse turtle populations—freshwater, marine, and terrestrial.

Although they are notoriously slow-moving, turtles still survive on Earth because of their remarkable adaptations—an exterior shell for body protection, long lives, high reproductive output, stamina, and a capacity for doing without. Turtles are cold-blooded reptiles that were here long before mammals, and they're still around, continuing to adapt to many different habitats and ecological niches, still interbreeding, evolving, and speciating. *Turtles of Alabama* is a fitting celebration of that phenomenal variety and strength.

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