## Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Ernst, Carl H. 1990. *Pseudemys gorzugi.*

# *Pseudemys gorzugi* Ward
# Rio Grande Cooter

*Pseudemys concinna gorzugi* Ward, 1984:29. Type-locality, "from 3 1/2 mi. W. Jimenez, Rio San Diego, Coahuila, Mexico, 850 feet altitude". Holotype, University of Kansas Museum of Natural History 39986, adult female shell, skull, skeleton, collected by Peter S. Chrapliwy, 19 June 1952 (not examined by author).

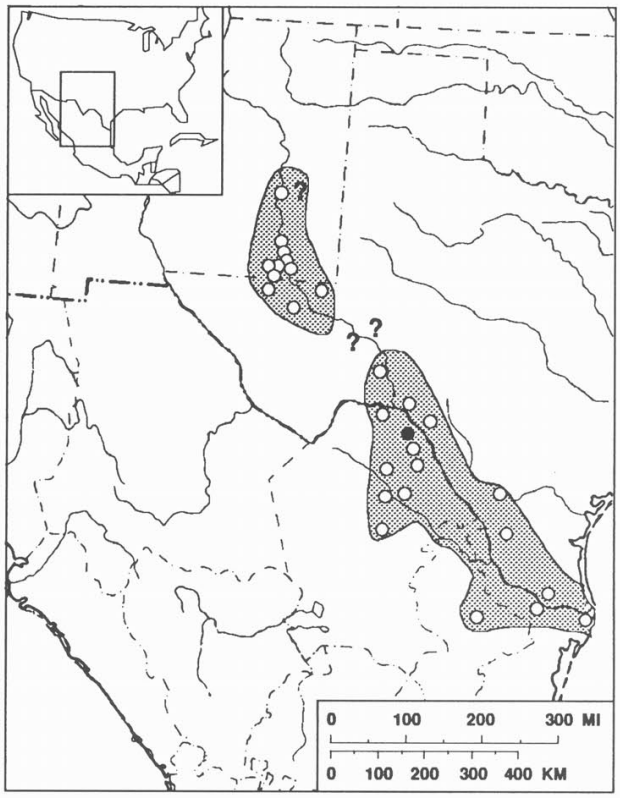
• **Content.** *Pseudemys gorzugi* is monotypic.

• **Definition.** Adults reach 23.5 cm in carapace length. The carapace is an elongate oval in outline, dorsally flattened, highest at the middle, widest behind the middle, and bears a slight medial keel and serrate posterior marginals. The pleural scutes are etched by shallow longitudinal grooves. The vertebrals are broader than long, although the first may be slightly elongated. The ground color of the carapace is olive to greenish-brown and is marked by blotches of alternating yellow and black rings on each scute. The second pleural has a pattern of four distinct blotches of concentric black and yellow rings. A similar blotch of alternating yellow and black lies across each ventral intermarginal seam. Two dark horizontal bars cross the bridge in juveniles, but in adults may be confined to the axillary and inguinal areas. The narrow, hingeless plastron has a posterior, medial notch. It is yellow with black seam borders in juveniles; the dark borders fade with maturity, leaving only black gular-humeral and humero-pectoral seam borders in adults. The upper jaw is smooth, lacking a medial notch or flanking tooth-like cusps. The crushing surfaces of both jaws bear a cluster of well developed denticulations. The skin is green with yellow stripes on the head, neck, limbs and tail. The oval-shaped, postorbital blotch is a dark-bordered, yellow centered ocellus. The temporal stripe curves dorsally over the postorbital blotch, broadens anteriorly, and ends at the level of the posterior corner of the mouth. A wide sagittal stripe runs from the nape to the tip of the snout, but no prefrontal arrow occurs because supraorbital stripes are absent. A broad Y-shaped stripe is present on the chin. Ward (1984) described additional skeletal and scute characters.

Males have elongated, thin foreclaws and thicker tails with the vent situated posterior to the carapacial rim. Females are larger, have more vaulted carapaces, and have the anal vent positioned beneath the posterior marginals.

• **Descriptions and Illustrations.** The only published description is in Ward (1984). A black and white photograph of the adult shell is in Ward (1984), and black and white photographs of juveniles are in Carr (1952; as *Pseudemys floridana texana*) and Ward (1984).

• **Distribution.** This turtle occurs in the Rio Grande watershed of Texas and northeastern México from Brownsville to the Big Bend north of Del Rio, Terrell County, and in the Pecos River drainage of northwestern Texas (Culberson, Reeves, and Loving counties) and southeastern New Mexico, possibly as far north as the Bitter Lakes Wildlife Refuge, Chaves County. Degenhardt and Christiansen (1974) discussed its range (under *Pseudemys concinna texana*) in New Mexico, and Dixon (1987) presented a map of its distribution in Texas. Bundy (1951) and Legler (1959) originally reported it (as *P. floridana texana*) from New Mexico. Smith and Smith (1980) discussed the distribution in Mexico and mapped the isolated populations in northeastern Coahuila, central Nuevo León, and northeastern Tamaulipas (as *Pseudemys c. texana*), and Powell et al. (1984) reported its presence (as *Pseudemys c. texana*) at another Coahuilan site. Ward (1984) thought that the apparent 161 km hiatus separating the Rio Grande and Pecos populations was produced by pollution of the intervening waterways by runoff from oil and natural gas wells.




**Map.** Solid circle marks the type-locality; hollow circles mark other records. Question mark indicates population probably extirpated.

• **Fossil Record.** None.

• **Pertinent Literature.** Because of its only recent recognition as a distinct taxon, most past references to this turtle are under the names *Pseudemys concinna* or *P. floridana,* and it is usually impossible to determine if the data are referable to this species or the recently elevated species *P. texana* (Ward, 1984). In addition to the original description, Ward (1984) presented data on distribution, geographic variation in head and shell patterns, and comparisons with *P. texana* and *P. concinna.* Milstead et al. (1950) and Degenhardt and Christiansen (1974) described the habitat, and Legler (1959) reported plant remains in the gut. Camper and Dixon (1988) reported the use of a passive integrated transponder for tracking purposes.

• **Etymology.** Named after George R. Zug, Curator of Amphibians and Reptiles, National Museum of Natural History.

• **Remarks.** *Pseudemys gorzugi* was designated a subspecies of *P. concinna* by Ward (1984), but it is allopatric from *P. concinna* and there is no evidence of gene exchange with the closest *concinna* populations, *P. c. metteri.*

The biology of *P. gorzugi* is so poorly known that a study of its behavior and ecology is a necessity.

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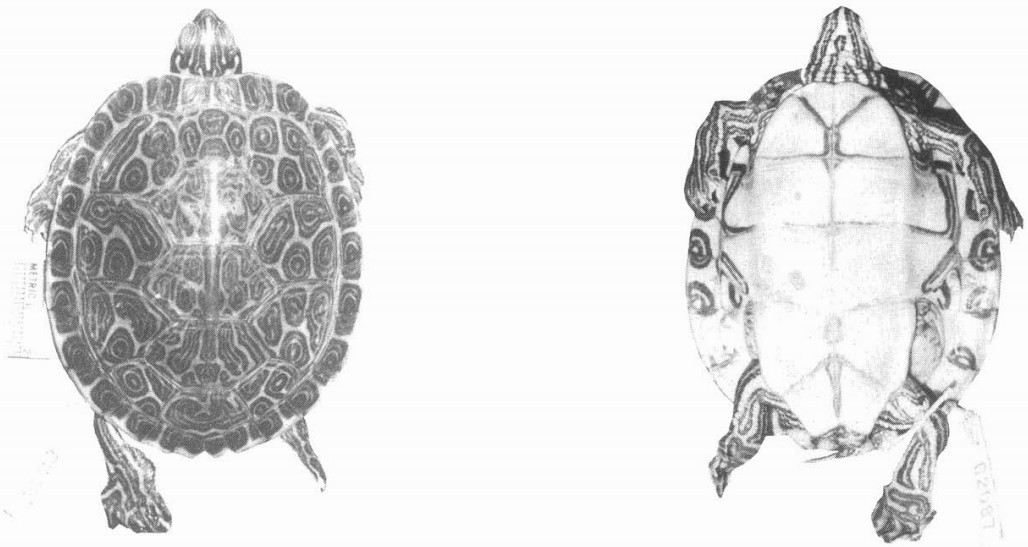

**Figure.** Dorsum and venter of a juvenile *Pseudemys gorzugi* from the upper Río Sabinas basin, Coahuila, México (Bobby Witcher Memorial Collection, Avila College, Kansas City, Missouri: BWMC 2087). Photograph by Donald D. Smith.


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