

## ENDANGERED SPECIES OBSERVER PROGRAM

To: Roger Zimmer  
NIMPS  
409-766-3508

Dredge *OUACHITA* - Brownsville, TX  
USACE, Galveston District

notes: tried to fax on Thursday,  
but had trouble with the  
ship's cellular telephone.

2/23/95  
Tried again dredge today, 02-24-95,  
Had to wait for shore engineer to get

Load# 144 Start 0122 fax sent 0644 Thanks EW  
Dump 0701

Location (lat/long) stations 60+00 - 131+00. H2O Temp 65

Weather cloudy, winds S @ 12-18 knots, seas 2-4 ft, Tide ebb  
air temperature - 65.

Port Draghead rock, trash. TED: OK

Stbd Draghead cable, wood. TED: OK

Port Overflow rock

Stbd Overflow rocks

Port Dis.-Fore skate, rocks, trash.

Stbd Dis.- Mid rock, cable

Port Dis.- Aft rocks, rope, trash.

SKIMMER: Green turtle, grass, old dead skates, trash.

Comments: At 0520 an observer went to clean the skimmer screening during the loading cycle. It had become clogged with large amounts of grass, trash, and dead skates. A live, juvenile green turtle was found on the port side of the skimmer. The turtle was bleeding from the posterior area of the carapace. The plastron was also fractured and the skin became increasingly pink over time, indicative of internal bleeding. Other small abrasions were noted over the turtles body.

The turtle was measured and photographed. Arrangements were made to transport the turtle to the local zoo for care. The turtle was taken off the dredge on the crew boat at 0920. The turtle was alive at this time, although its movements had become less energetic than when it was first removed.

When the turtle was found at 0520 the skimmer screen was only partly cleaned due to time constraints. When the observer returned to finish cleaning this area, after continued digging, on the way to the dump site, he found the screen clean of the debris that had been left. This indicates that debris is falling back out of the skimmer and into the hopper, at least during moderate swells when the load is agitated. This raises the question of whether the turtle would have been found if not seen from the catwalk during a patrol. Observers have noted this possibility and have increased the frequency of their hopper patrols.

Observer(s) On Duty: Eric Westerman

cracked 5th central scute,  
bleeding

minor abrasions  
lateral scute

Dredge Ouschita  
Braço Santiago Pass  
Sampled live  
Chelonia mydas  
02-23-95  
Load 144 0520

light bleeding  
from margin of  
marginal scute

minor abrasions

ventral side large  
blood clot

8th marginal scute  
from posterior scute  
cracked

pectoral and  
abdominal scutes  
cracked

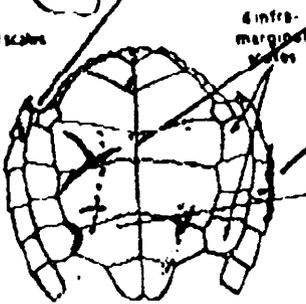
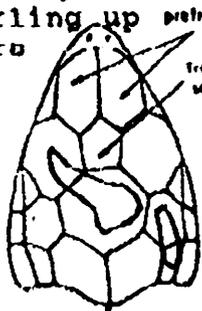
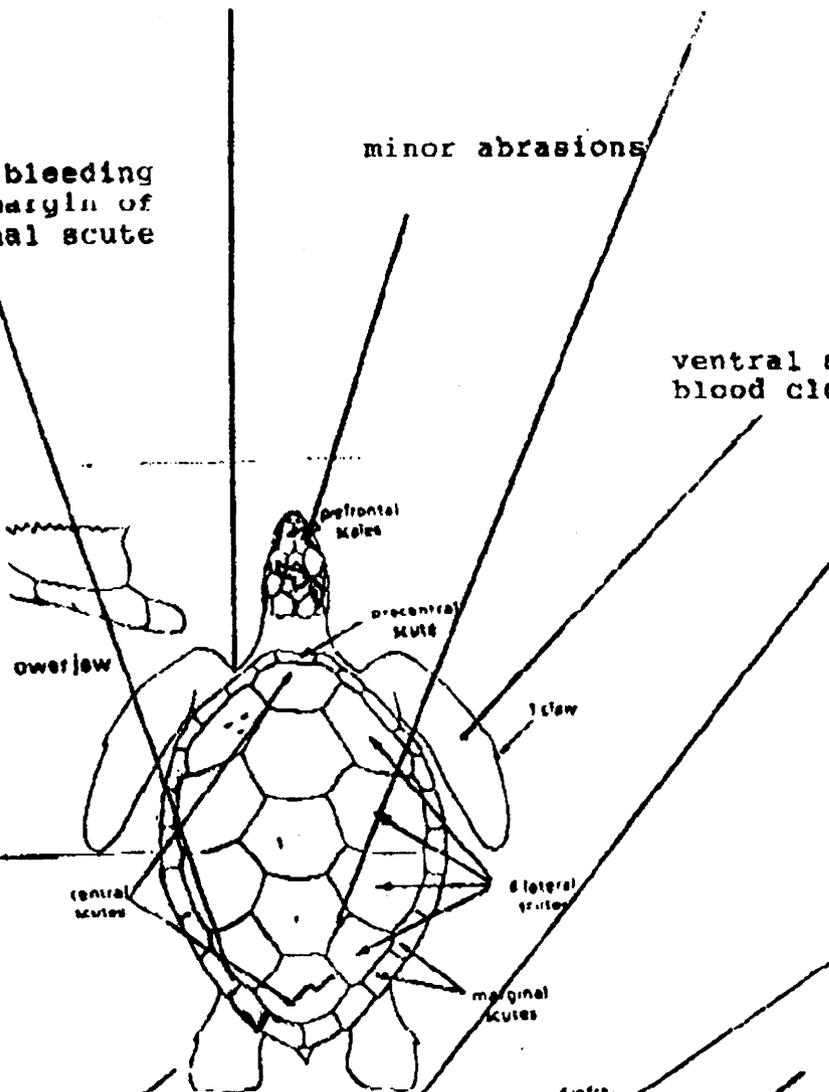
dotted lines  
scrapes

6&7 marginal scute from  
from posterior scute has  
minor abrasions and the  
6th scute minor bleeding

light bleeding  
from inframarginal  
scute margin

note  
ventral  
skin  
notably  
pink in  
color

note was curling up  
rear flippers



dorsal view of head

plastron

Fig. 27

minor abrasions

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Dredge Quachita  
 Project Brazo Santiago Pass

INCIDENT REPORT OF SEA TURTLE MORTALITY AND DREDGING ACTIVITY

Species Chelonia mydas  
 Date 02-23-95  
 Time: 24 hour clock 0520  
 Geographic site Brazo Santiago Pass  
Stations 60+00-131+00  
 Location: Latitude 26-04-00 N Longitude 97-09-09 W  
 Vessel name Dredge Quachita  
 Type of dredging activity Hopper, maintenance  
 Load # 144  
 Sampling method Overflow  
 Location specimen recovered Skimmer  
 Draghead deflector? X YES      NO  
 Condition of Deflector ok  
 Weather conditions Cloudy, Winds S 12-18 knots, Seas 2-4  
 Water temp: Surface 65 Column       
 Head width Nt  
 Plastron length 22 cm  
 Carapace S.L. length 27 cm  
 Carapace S.L. width 23 cm  
 Carapace O.C. length Nt  
 Carapace O.C. width Nt  
 Condition of specimen Injured, alive  
 Turtle tagged      YES X NO  
 Tag #      Tag Date       
 Comments/other Turtle taken to local zoo for care  
 Observer's Name Eric Westerman