

shields subequal, subrhomboid; as broad as long, else broader than long. Marginal shields twenty-seven in number. Yellow and olive, maculated with brown and black.

Observ.—The carapax, an outline of which is subjoined, is all that we at present know of this species. Nothing would have proved more interesting than the head and flippers of a turtle apparently so remarkable. Its frame is lightly built; the bones and horny shield being very thin, contrasting strangely with that of *Chelonia formosa* and *Caretta rostrata*, with which it is associated, amongst the Polynesian or Coral Islands.

The anterior edge is subconcave, the odd marginal shield quite narrow and transversely elongated; the next two pairs being the smallest of the series. The posterior pair is longer than broad. The third vertebral shield is the narrowest of the series; this, however, may not prove a constant character. The dorsal region itself is depressed; the sides gradually sloping towards the periphery, which is nearly even, slightly undulated posteriorly. The thoracic region is narrower across its middle than the pelvic region.

The coloration consists of an admixture of brown, black, yellow, and olive, so as to assume a marmorated appearance.

The following remarks we copy from the "Note-book" of the Expedition, under the head of Rosa Island:

"Several individuals were seen, and one captured, viz., a young male. Their trails were frequent in the sand, to the upper part of the beach, visited apparently for the purpose of depositing their eggs; but none of the latter were discovered, though careful search was made. In the shallow part of the lagoon I had an opportunity of witnessing the speed with which they travel in the water, and was surprised to find them to all appearances quite a match for the shark in this respect. The one captured had the alimentary canal crowded with seaweeds (the *Caulerpa*, seen at Raraka), and I am at a loss to imagine where a sufficient supply of this substance can be procured, unless at considerable depth. This may also account for the general scarcity of these animals among these islands where marine vegetables are so rare."

Under the head of Honden Island, we likewise read:

"Two specimens observed near the surf were females, and had very short tails. A male had the tail seventeen inches long, and was found

half way to the beach, a fore and hind flipper chopped off by the sharks, and it was supposed that it had remained ashore to keep out of their way. A fourth specimen, found in the same situation, had a hole bitten out of its side. They were frequently seen swimming from the boats, and probably numbers might have been taken by remaining a night on the island. There is here no vegetable food for them, unless the plants on shore, which did not appear to be cropped."

Loc.—Honden Island, Paumotu Group; Tahiti and Eimeo; Rosa Island.

Plate XXXI, fig. 8, represents an outline, seen from above, of the carapax of *Chelonia tenuis*, considerably reduced in size.

SUB ORDO II. TESTUDINATA.

The representatives of this group inhabit either dry land, marshy districts, or fresh waters. Their body is generally depressed, broader than deep, rounded, elliptical, or ovate in its outline, which is either even, or variously serrated or emarginated, and covered with epidermic or horny scales, or a soft skin. The plastron is broad, or narrow; immovable, or movable either upon its anterior or posterior half, or both ways at the same time. There are four limbs, an anterior and a posterior pair, subequal, moderate in length, slender or stout, and more or less retractile. The hands and feet are club-shaped, palmated, or semi-palmated, the fingers and toes being always movable, terminated in part or in totality by blunt nails or acerated claws, which vary from three to five. The tail is conical, tapering, long or short.

The head is subquadrangular or subcircular across the orbits, protected with plates, or covered with a naked skin; the snout being pointed or abbreviated. The neck is retractile or simply contractile; generally naked, exhibiting sometimes membranous flaps or appendages, and occasionally covered with scales. The eyes, as a general feature, are large, and in a few instances, quite small, compared to the size of the animal. The nostrils are anterior, quite approximated.

The food of the *Testudinata* consists of animal and vegetable substances, according to the genera and species.

Plates :

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UNITED STATES
EXPLORING EXPEDITION.

DURING THE YEARS

1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842.

UNDER THE COMMAND OF

CHARLES WILKES, U.S.N.

HERPETOLOGY.

BY

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