

VI. CHELONIAN REPTILES, OR TURTLES.—Those singular reptiles, commonly known by the name of Tortoises and Turtles, and designated by naturalists CHELONIA (from *Chelone*, the Greek term for a Tortoise), are distinguished from all other animals by the double osseous shield, or case, in which their bodies are enclosed; the head and neck, extremities, and tail, alone being excluded. This remarkable character is produced by the extraordinary development of the bones of the thorax. The breast-plate, or *plastron*, which is the true sternum, is composed of nine pieces of bone, eight of which are in pairs, and the ninth, or odd plate, is situated between the four anterior plates. The variation in the form of these plates is considerable, and affords important distinctive characters. In the young state of land and fresh-water tortoises, there are vacancies between the pieces, which are filled up in the adult, and the whole united into one bony plate; but in the marine-turtles (and also in the *Trionyxes*, or soft tortoises), these pieces do not completely unite, and interspaces always remain. The bones of which the dorsal buckler, carapace, or upper shield is composed, consist of eight of the ten pairs of ribs, united by a longitudinal series of angular plates, attached to the annular part of the vertebræ throughout the whole, or a great part of their length, according to the age and species of the individual. Numerous modifications exist in the form of the buckler, in its flatness or convexity, in the degree of extension