

tical with that of Europe; but, in matters relating to the specific distinction of Turtles, I am not willing to take as evidence the assertion even of such distinguished zoölogists, because they have described several North American species as identical, which I know not only to be distinct species, but even to belong to distinct genera.¹ There can be no doubt, however, that there is only one species of Sphargis in the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean, which is universally known as SPHARGIS CORIACEA, *Gray*.²

The first author who mentions this species is Rondelet, who, in his work *de Piscibus*, published in 1554, describes and figures it, under the name of Testudo coriacea sive Mercurii, from specimens caught in the Mediterranean. It has since been noticed occasionally in the Mediterranean, and upon the Atlantic coast of France and of England; but in all I cannot make out more than nine instances³ of its occurrence in the waters of Europe. Nor has it ever been seen to lay its egg and multiply in that part of the world, while it is very common in the warm parts of the Atlantic Ocean, especially along its American shores. It breeds regularly every year in the spring, on the Bahamas, on the Tortugas, and on the coast of Brazil. It occurs less frequently, already, along the coast of Florida; it is caught occasionally on the coast of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, and only accidentally visits the more northern shores of the United States. It has, however, been noticed in the Chesapeake Bay, off Sandy Hook, and in Long Island Sound. One specimen, taken in Massachusetts Bay in 1824, is now preserved in the Boston Museum. In 1848, I obtained one specimen myself, caught about Cape Cod by Capt. N. Atwood.

From this critical examination of the localities where this species is found, and

¹ *Ozotheca odorata* and *Cinosternum pennsylvanicum*, *Xerobates carolinus* and *Chelonoidis tabulata*.

² This species exemplifies clearly a point in zoological nomenclature which seems hardly yet understood, though it has been frequently debated before. Many naturalists still believe, that the authority attached to the systematic name of a species indicates the discoverer or first describer of such a species. Nothing can be more remote from the truth. The name of a naturalist, attached to the scientific name of an animal, indicates only that he is the first who employed that binominal appellation to designate such an animal. In this case Rondelet was the first who described the species, which he calls TESTUDO coriacea sive Mercurii. When Merrem recognized that it constitutes a genus for itself, he called the genus SPHARGIS, but wantonly changed the specific name

to *Sphargis mercurialis*. Had he retained the specific name under which Rondelet described it, it would have been called *Sphargis coriacea*, *Merrem*, as the generic and specific names together constitute the systematic name of any animal. As it happened, J. E. Gray was the first to connect the generic and specific names, which must take precedence over all others, and so the species is for ever to be called *Sphargis coriacea*, *Gray*, even though Gray neither established the genus nor described the species first.

³ Three times in the sixteenth century recorded by Rondelet; once at Certe, mentioned by Amoreux; once at the mouth of the Loire, recorded by Delafond; twice on the coast of Cornwall, recorded by Borlase; once on the coast of Dorset, recorded by Shaw; and once on the eastern coast of Italy, recorded by Schweigger.