assistance, and Dr. M. Neenan for his interest in the work and help in preparation of the report.

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Occurrence of Mesoplastra in a Cryptodiran Turtle, *Lepidochelys olivacea*

MESOPLASTRAL bones, a characteristic feature of most amphichelid turtles, are to-day restricted to members of the Pleurodiran family Pelomedusidae. Of the three genera of this family, two (*Podocnemis* and *Pelomedusa*) have the mesoplastra reduced to small, widely spaced bones separating the hyoplastra and hypoplastra at the outer part of their common suture. Only in *Pelusios* are they retained in their pristine contiguous condition, a retention perhaps connected with the necessity of the hyoplastra having a straight posterior margin to allow flexure of the hinged plastron to occur. The mesoplastra of *Pelomedusa* may be missing as an occasional variant¹, but there appears to be no record of mesoplastra having been recorded in a cryptodire; indeed, a fossil plastron with mesoplastra would definitely not be classified as cryptodiran at all. It is therefore of interest to record the finding of a plastron of the Pacific ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) in which the hyo- and hypoplastra appear to be separated by a pair of well-defined contiguous mesoplastra (Fig. 1). The plastron was found separate from the remainder of the animal on Shell Beach, North-West District, British Guiana. (The discovery of *Lepidochelys* in British Guiana is documented elsewhere^{2,3}.) The specimen was not collected, but a colour slide was taken of it, close inspection of which leaves no doubt that the breaks are true sutures and not sulci or post-mortem fractures.

It is possibly significant that the specimen involved should be a *Lepidochelys*, as the Cheloniidae are closer to the Amphichelydia than any other turtle family, judging by such features as the retention of infra-marginals and other small plastral laminae (though the non-retractile neck and roofed-over skull are probably secondary reversions). Moreover, the ridley is the most primitive member of the family, having the most highly ossified shell, and showing a curious reversion to a (supposedly

Fig. 1. Plastron of *Lepidochelys olivacea* with mesoplastra

Fig. 2. Normal plastron of *Lepidochelys olivacea*

Fig. 3. Plastron of a Jurassic amphichelid (*Pleurosternum* sp.) from the Purbeck Limestone of Swanage, Dorset (Oxford University Museum No. 13797)

primitive) multi-scutate condition of the carapace; though in this connexion it must be remembered that the typical testudinate pattern of five centrals and four laterals was established even among Jurassic amphichelids. The ridley also lacks the specialization of large size shown by other members of the Cheloniidae.

In view of the symmetry of these aberrant 'mesoplastra', their occurrence in the primitive *Lepidochelys* and the close similarity between them and the mesoplastra of amphichelids, one is tempted to suggest that they have a true homology with the mesoplastra of primitive turtles. However, considering the very long time since a *Lepidochelys* ancestor had mesoplastra, it is perhaps more likely that the present specimen merely shows a casual division of embryonic ossification centres. Neither hypothesis can be tested, of course, even if the specimen were in hand.

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Collection of the Liquid Fraction of Bee Venom

THE liquid fraction of honey bee venom (*Apis mellifera* L.) can be collected by a modification of the device described by Benton, Morse and Stewart¹ and Benton².

This device consists of a flat surface over which steel wires are stretched at $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. (6.36-mm) intervals. The wires are alternately grounded and charged. The bees, on being shocked, sting down through a sheet of nylon parchment taffeta; the venom is left on the underside of