

Wagler, Duméril and Bibron, Fitzinger and others, while Gray¹ unites *Cinosternum* and *Staurotypus* as one genus. The genus *Sternothærus*, on the contrary, has undergone many successive alterations. When first distinguished by Bell,² it contained, besides its true representatives, a species also that belongs to a different genus, which I have called *Ozotheca*.³ Wagler having unfortunately introduced another name, *Pelusios*, for Bell's *Sternothærus*, the latter was inappropriately limited by Fitzinger to *Terrapene odorata*, whilst Duméril and Bibron⁴ referred this species to Wagler's genus *Staurotypus*,⁵ which ought, however, to embrace only its original type, the *St. triporcatus*. All the *Cinosternoidæ* are American.⁶

The assumption that the movability of the sternum⁷ indicates a close affinity among these Turtles has, to this day, prevented herpetologists from perceiving the family characters which distinguish the true *Cinosternoidæ* from the *Emydoidæ*, and likewise separate them from *Sternothærus*, as shown above in the description of these families.⁸ Among the many fossil *Testudinata* thus far described there is not a fragment indicating that the family of *Cinosternoidæ* has existed in earlier periods. This is the more surprising as its nearest relatives, the *Chelydroids* and the *Emydoids*, are well known to have existed in past ages. There is, however, a peculiar character prevailing in the family of *Cinosternoidæ*, which it is difficult to express with precision, but which may yet account for their absence. Most types of animals and plants, when making their first appearance upon earth, are either marked by striking peculiarities, that make them stand out boldly among their contemporaries on account of their great difference, or they exhibit characteristics, in which the prominent features of later types are more or less blended together. Nothing of the kind exists in the *Cinosternoids*. On the contrary, they are, as it were, abortive *Testudinata*,—dwarfish in size, abrupt and quick in their feeble movements, seeming young when full-grown; and yet, assuming very early the characteristic features of the adult, they are everywhere in the country mistaken for young *Chelydroids*. In all the species of which I had an opportunity to examine numerous specimens I noticed marked differences between the males and females, consisting chiefly in the form of the front part of the shield, in the length of the tail, and in the scales of the legs.⁹

¹ Cat. Brit. Mus., 1834, p. 34.

² Zool. Journ., vol. 2, p. 305.

³ Compare p. 251.

⁴ Erp. gén., vol. 2, p. 358.

⁵ WAGLER, Nat. Syst. d. Amph., p. 137.

⁶ Compare p. 302.

⁷ Compare p. 346 and 418.

⁸ See p. 346. Nothing can prove more directly

the importance of a careful discrimination between family and generic characters than the changes which the classification of these genera has undergone.

⁹ The difference in the form of the shield consists in the greater width of its front part in the female. The tail of the male is much longer and stronger than that of the female. There is, in the male, a patch of rough scales in the bend between the thigh and the leg.