

marsh community. Size, food habits, and population densities seem to bear out this view. Thus with density decrease of these turtles, it is reasonable to expect the shallow-water ecosystems of the basin to become altered in regard to their energetics, as well as their composition. More work is needed to clarify the ecological interrelationships existing between the unique biota of this basin, the *T. coahuila* population, and the physical environment.

Minckley (1969) warns that "acceleration of modification by man adds some urgency to the situation [in the Cuatro Ciénegas basin]. The biota is definitely under stress." Although habitat destruction appears to represent the major threat to its existence, *T. coahuila* could also be placed in jeopardy through callous exploitation by dealers in rare or unusual reptiles, or even by some herpetologists. Adequate series of *T. coahuila* have already been assembled; presently more than 100 preserved specimens are in U.S. museums alone. Hence there is very little need for future collecting, except when living specimens are required for valid experimental purposes.

No protective measures have yet been taken. In view of its rare status, I propose: (1) the adoption of measures to establish the feasibility of any planned irrigation projects in regions immediately surrounding the prime aquatic habitats in the Cuatro Ciénegas basin; (2) the establishment of restrictions against the indiscriminate construction of canals that may result in the drainage of major aquatic habitats; and (3) special protection for the animal itself in the form of legislation limiting collecting only for scientific purposes and by permission of the proper governmental authorities. Permission should be given only to investigators studying specific problems concerning the species.

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