



# Life in a Shell

*Donald C. Jackson*

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## **Life in a Shell** Donald C. Jackson

Trundling along in essentially the same form for some 220 million years, turtles have seen dinosaurs come and go, mammals emerge, and humankind expand its dominion. Is it any wonder the persistent reptile bested the hare? In this engaging book physiologist Donald Jackson shares a lifetime of observation of this curious creature, allowing us a look under the shell of an animal at once so familiar and so strange. Here we discover how the turtle's proverbial slowness helps it survive a long, cold winter under ice. How the shell not only serves as a protective home but also influences such essential functions as buoyancy control, breathing, and surviving remarkably long periods without oxygen, and how many other physiological features help define this unique animal. Jackson offers insight into what exactly it's like to live inside a shell—to carry the heavy carapace on land and in water, to breathe without an expandable ribcage, to have sex with all that body armor intervening. Along the way we also learn something about the process of scientific discovery—how the answer to one question leads to new questions, how a chance observation can change the direction of study, and above all how new research always builds on the previous work of others. A clear and informative exposition of physiological concepts using the turtle as a model organism, the book is as interesting for what it tells us about scientific investigation as it is for its deep and detailed understanding of how the enduring turtle “works.”

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