

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

RED-EARED SLIDER (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)

NATIVE RANGE

The Red-Eared Slider is native to southeastern United States and south through Mexico, Central America and Brazil.

DESCRIPTION

Red-Eared Sliders...

- Are green with fine yellow stripes on their head, neck, limbs, and tail
- Have distinguishing red 'ear' patches (may fade to dark brown or yellow) on sides of the head
- Have a top shell (carapace) that is dome shaped and that is dark green with light and dark markings
- Have a carapace length up to 28 cm (11")
- Are yellow on bottom of shell (plastron) with dark blotched markings
- For more information refer to the BC Turtle Watch ID Guide <http://hat.bc.ca/attachments/Turtle-IDGuide-May2008.pdf>

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Red-Eared Sliders...

- May compete with native turtles for food and habitat
- May carry diseases contracted from other turtles in the pet trade that they can transfer to native turtles
 - * In the state of Washington, populations of the native turtle *Actinemys marmorata* were seriously impacted by a respiratory infection in 1990 and *T. scripta* was the likely vector (Hays et al. 1999)
- Pet Red-eared Sliders have been known carriers of Salmonella that is harmful to humans

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Due to release by pet owners, Red-Eared Sliders have spread into ponds and wetlands of B.C. There is some evidence that sliders have attempted to nest in southern B.C., but there have been no cases of successful hatches.



REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

www.reportinvasives.ca

Photo: Kristiina Ovaska



PRIMARY IMPACT:
Red-Eared Sliders are known carriers of diseases that are harmful to humans and wildlife.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sliders have a fascinating kind of feeding system called neustophagia, which is similar to the feeding style of the baleen whale. Skimming the pond surface with lower jaw hanging open, a slider catches floating food particles and stores it in its pharynx. The turtle then closes its mouth, expelling water through its nostrils and swallows the remaining food.

RED-EARED SLIDER (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)

HABITAT

Sliders can be found in a variety of freshwater habitats including rivers, swamps, ponds and ditches; with slow current, muddy bottoms and dense vegetation.

ARE THEY HERE YET?

Yes. In B.C., sliders can be found on southern Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and the Southern Interior.

LOOKALIKES

Red-Eared Sliders may be confused with B.C.'s native Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*). Distinguishing characteristics of the Western Painted Turtle include:

- **bold yellow stripes on head, neck, legs and tail;**
- **no red patch on sides of the head; and**
- **a red plastron (shell bottom) with dark markings.**

Refer to this comparison factsheet for more information:

<http://hat.bc.ca/attachments/Turtle-IDGuide-May2008.pdf>

Other introduced subspecies of Sliders also occur in B.C., including the Yellow-bellied Slider (*Trachemys scripta scripta*) and Cumberland Slider (*Trachemys scripta troostii*). Cumberland Sliders are unique for their orange (but not red) plastron; yellow stripe behind each eye; and fewer, wider stripes on the legs, neck, and head in comparison to Red-eared Sliders. The Yellow-bellied Slider has a large yellow blotch behind the eye (mostly females and juveniles), broad vertical bands on side of carapace, a yellow plastron, and narrow yellow stripes on top side of forelegs.

*Accurate identification of these three subspecies can be difficult as they are often hybridized for the pet trade.

HOW CAN WE STOP THEM?

- Before purchasing a pet turtle, consider how you plan to take care of it long term
- Contact your local SPCA or local turtle rescue organization if you can no longer care for your pet turtle
- Do not release Red-eared Sliders into the wild
- Raise awareness about this invasive species in your community to avoid further spread in B.C.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND ONE?

Document your sightings by entering them to the provincial database to help monitor distributions and spread:

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wildlife/wsi/incidental_obs.htm