

Red-eared Slider

Trachemys scripta elegans

Order: Testudines

Family: Emydidae

Description: The top of the shell (carapace) is smooth and gently curved, and it is olive to black with yellow stripes and bars. This medium-sized turtle is best identified by a red or sometimes yellow patch that is found just behind its eye.

Special Features:

- **Habitat Use** – Almost exclusively aquatic, Red-eared sliders rarely venture out of the water except to lay eggs or to migrate to a new water body.
- **Activity** – Sliders are active at any time of the day; however, feeding usually occurs in the early morning or late afternoon. At night, sliders sleep underwater.

Range and Habitat: The Red-eared slider is at home in quiet, freshwater systems that have muddy bottoms and abundant aquatic vegetation. They range from Indiana to New Mexico and down through Texas to the Gulf of Mexico. The slider is commonly seen basking in the sun, on logs or masses of vegetation. Originally from west of the Mississippi River, they are now common in Florida and other parts of the world, probably due to people releasing their pets.

Wild Diet: Sliders are omnivorous. Hatchlings and juveniles are more carnivorous, preferring animal matter. As they age, they gradually consume more plant matter. When adult, they show no preference for plants or animals and will eat almost any available food. Prey include insects, crayfish, shrimp, worms, snails, amphibians, and small fish. Algae and

duckweed are two of the aquatic plants eaten by red-eared sliders.

Reproduction:

Mating and courtship usually occur in the spring, but pairs have also been seen in the summer and early fall. Sliders have an elaborate courtship. A male tries to get in front of a female and face her, then he stretches out his front feet and vibrates his claws against the her head and neck. Mating usually takes about 15 minutes, then the female digs a nest outside of the water and lays about 5-20 eggs that take 65-75 days to hatch.

Predators:

Raccoons, otters, alligators, gars, crows, mink, and muskrats prey on sliders. Occasionally they are caught and eaten by humans.

Notes:

- These turtles are very popular in the pet trade.