

RED-EARED SLIDERS

Trachemys scripta elegans



Range

Red-eared sliders are Texas's most common **aquatic** turtles. These turtles get their name from a broad red stripe behind their eye and their habit of sliding off rocks and logs when startled. Older turtles are often covered with a thick coat of algae.



Reptiles

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Appearance

Length: 5 to 11 inches

Weight: Varies

A medium sized turtle with a dark green oval shell, marked with yellow in younger turtles, green legs with thin yellow stripes and a green head with a red stripe behind the eye.

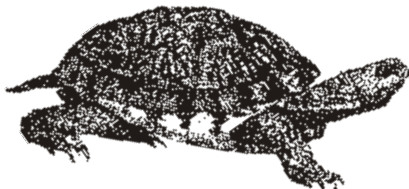
Behavior

Habit: Aquatic, cold-blooded, omnivore

Diet: Red-eared sliders feed on aquatic plants, small fish and decaying material.

Lifespan: Some live more than 30 years.

Sliders are **cold-blooded** and spend much of the day sunning on rocks and logs. The young turtles are eaten by a variety of **predators** including birds, racoons, alligators and large fish. Sliders bury themselves in loose soil or mud during the winter to escape the cold.



Habitat

Red-eared sliders are found in most permanent slow-moving water sources with mud bottoms in the eastern three quarters of the state. When population numbers get high, these turtles move across land to other bodies of water in search of food and space.

Red-eared Sliders & Man

Baby red-eared sliders were once very popular as children's pets until it was discovered that some of them carried the disease, **salmonella**. It is now illegal to sell sliders less than 4 inches in diameter. Most wild animals make very poor pets and are best observed in their native **habitat**.

Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: 5 years

Mating season: March through July. Females produce up to 3 clutches of eggs.

Gestation: Eggs hatch in 60-75 days or overwinter and hatch in the spring.

No. of young: Four to 23 from oval, white eggs with leathery shells.

Legend Has It ...

For many American Indians tribes, the land on which they lived was the back of a huge "mother turtle," floating in a vast sea. Turtles were considered sacred and never killed. The thirteen pieces on some turtle's shells are thought to represent the thirteen moons of the year.

Now You Know!

- › Sliders enjoy laying in the sun for hours at a time. If there are not enough rocks or logs for all of them they will often stack themselves 2 or 3 layers deep!
- › Female turtles lay their eggs in holes that they dig in the ground and leave. Young turtles are born having to take care of themselves.
- › A turtle's shell is actually made up of its ribs joined together and covered with a thin layer of skin. Each of the ribs is made of jigsaw-like sections called **scutes** which grow at the edges. This allows the turtle to increase in size without outgrowing its shell.
- › Mature males have long toenails on their front feet that they use when courting females. The males swim backwards in front of females and fan water over their faces.
- › Sliders have poor hearing but are very sensitive to vibrations. This makes it hard to sneak up on them.
- › Their name, slider, comes from the fact that they are quick to slide off of rocks, logs or the banks if danger threatens.