

Don't Let It Loose! – Red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans*



Where does the species originate from?

Red-eared sliders are native to the southern United States and northern Mexico.

How are they introduced and spread?

Red-eared sliders have been widely introduced through the pet trade. Turtle ownership reached its peak in popularity during the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* craze of the late 1980's and early 1990's when it was revealed the crime fighting "heroes in a half shell" were red-eared sliders. Unfortunately many turtles escaped or were intentionally released into the wild when owners grew tired of caring for them; not realizing the turtles can live up to 40 years and grow up to 13 inches.

Environmental impact:

Red-eared sliders are very aggressive turtles and will often displace and outcompete native turtles for common food, nesting and basking sites. Red-eared sliders released into the wild may also transmit parasites or disease to native populations.

Turtle facts:

- The red-eared slider is on the list of 100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species.
- Small turtles may carry the salmonella bacteria that can be transmitted to humans.
- A group of turtles is called a "bale".

Don't Let It Loose! Educate yourself about the needs of a particular species before buying. How big will it grow? How long will it live? How much care will it need?