

RED-EARED SLIDER/TERRAPIN

(*Trachemys scripta elegans*)



Identification:

- Females 25-33 cm and males 20-25 cm in length.
- Males usually smaller than females. Tail of male is longer and thicker than that of females.
- Shell is oval and flattened.
- Distinctive red stripe on each side of the head.
- Shell usually dark green with light and dark markings.
- Plastron (bottom shell) is yellow with dark, irregular markings.
- Older animals become darker with more uniform markings. Red stripes often less distinct.



Distribution:

- Non-native species.
- Native to North America.
- Introduced into Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia.
- Abundance and distribution in the UK not well known but numbers thought to be increasing.
- Individuals found in the wild in the UK thought to be pets that have escaped or have been deliberately released.

Ecology:

- Found in freshwater ponds, lakes, canals and slow-moving rivers.
- Almost entirely aquatic but leave the water to bask in the sun and lay eggs.
- Feed on fish, tadpoles, snails, crickets, and aquatic plants.
- Three subspecies are recognised: *Trachemys scripta scripta*, *Trachemys scripta troostii* and *Trachemys scripta elegans*.

Lifecycle:

- Females can produce up to 3 clutches of 2-19 eggs per year.
- In the UK, reproduction in the wild is rarely successful, although egg laying behaviour has been observed.

N.B. The release of exotic species into the wild is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.



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