



RED-EARED SLIDER TURTLE

Testudines

Family: Emydidae

Genus: *Actinemys (Emys)*

Species: *marmorata*



Range native to Southeastern US and into Mexico

Habitat: still, warm water, such as ponds, lakes, swamps, creeks, streams, or slow-flowing rivers with basking sites

Niche: semiaquatic, omnivorous mainly aquatic plants but young carnivorous, diurnal

Wild diet: mainly aquatic plants

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild) 20 - 40 years

(Captivity) 20 – 30 years

Sexual dimorphism: females of the species are usually a little larger than the males.

Location in SF Zoo: Exploration Zone in small pond

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Red-eared sliders get their name from the small red dash around their ears. The "slider" part of their name comes from their ability to slide off rocks and logs and into the water quickly. They are medium-to-large sized turtle. Carapace is mildly domed and smooth with stripes and marks that aid in camouflaging an individual. Plastron is flat with yellow base color and variable dark spots. Feet are partially webbed with clawed toes helping them to swim and can be withdrawn inside the carapace along with the tail. Males have longer claws on their front feet than the females; this helps them to hold on to a female during mating and is used during courtship displays. The head can also be completely withdrawn inside the carapace but the shell cannot close at all.

Weight:

Carapace L at maturity: M 3.9 in
F 5.9 in

Carapace L at adult size: M 7- 9 in
F 10 - 12 in

These turtles are completely dependent on the temperature of their environments. Pond sliders are aquatic, omnivorous generalists, which rarely leave water except to bask.

The male's plastron is slightly concave, while that of the female is totally flat. The male's concave plastron also helps to stabilize the male on the female's carapace during mating.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Red-eared sliders are not threatened, but rather an invasive species that may threaten our native turtles. They are the most popular turtle species for pets. Due to its large size, Red-eareds can dominate limited basking sites, not giving Painted Turtles adequate basking opportunities. Clutch size tends to be larger, again giving Red-eareds the advantage. They are considered an invasive species in California, Oregon, Washington and many other states.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Red-eared sliders leave the water to sunbathe to regulate their temperature; they live in areas of calm water where they are able to leave the water easily by climbing onto rocks or tree trunks so they can warm up in the sun. Many individuals are often found sunbathing together in a group or even on top of each other. They brumate, but occasionally rise to the surface for food or air.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Courtship and mating activities for red-eared sliders usually occur between April and July, and take place under water. During courtship, the male swims around the female and flutters or vibrates the back side of his long claws on and around her face and head, possibly to direct pheromones towards her. The female swims toward the male and, if she is receptive, sinks to the bottom for mating.

After mating, the female spends extra time basking to keep her eggs warm. One female can lay up to three clutches in the same year, and clutches are usually spaced 12 to 36 days apart. It takes 21 days between the egg opening until water entry. Females dig a nest in open unshaded areas on land in soil that is not muddy

The sex of red-eared sliders is determined by the incubation temperature during critical phases of the embryos' development. Only males are produced when eggs are incubated at temperatures of 22–27 °C (72–81 °F), whereas females develop at warmer temperatures. Hatchlings emerge in 2.5 months and sometimes spend the winter in the nest.

Incubation: 59 – 112 days	length at birth:
# of eggs: 3 – 30 eggs per clutch;	Sexual Maturity: 12 – 18 mos

MISCELLANEOUS

The red-eared slider originated from the area around the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, in warm climates in the southeastern corner of the United States. Owing to their popularity as pets, red-eared sliders have been released or escaped into the wild in many parts of the world.

Turtles carry salmonella and other bacteria and there is a risk of Salmonella from pet turtles.

Sources:

<http://www.turtleconservationproject.org/red-eared-slider-facts.html>

<http://www.californiaherps.com/turtles/pages/t.s.elegans.html>

<http://www.issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=71>

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22028/0>

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