

Red-eared slider turtle

Trachemys scripta elegans



Have you seen this animal?

Report it immediately to Agriculture Victoria on 136 186
or email highrisk.invasiveanimals@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Why is it important to report red-eared slider turtle sightings?

The red-eared slider turtle is not native to Australia. It is a very adaptable and opportunistic invasive animal that has the ability to populate a wide range of fresh water ecosystems. They will compete with native turtles for food, basking sites, nesting sites and suitable habitat.

They have several attributes that give them a competitive advantage over native Australian species, such as their larger adult size, their aggressive nature, high fecundity and a much younger age of maturity. As juvenile red-eared slider turtles are largely omnivorous, they could have a detrimental impact on a range of aquatic species including rare amphibians.

Red-eared slider turtles also have the potential to carry exotic diseases and parasites which could be transmitted to native wildlife and potentially humans.

Red-eared slider turtles in Victoria

Red-eared slider turtles are classified as a Controlled Pest Animal under the Victorian *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. The importation, keeping, breeding and trading of this species, without appropriate permits, is illegal and penalties apply.

Red-eared slider turtles have been found in the wild in Victoria. They have been removed from Elsternwick Park Lake, the Yarra River and from several detections in urban streets of Melbourne.

The red-eared slider turtles found in Victoria are most likely escapee or deliberately released animals from the illegal pet trade. The illegal keeping of red-eared slider turtles poses one of the greatest risks of the species establishing in Victoria. Escapees or deliberately released animals can be extremely difficult and costly to recover.

Reporting a red-eared slider turtle

Reports of the red-eared slider turtle are critical to Agriculture Victoria's efforts to protect Victoria from the establishment of the species. If you think you have found a red-eared slider turtle, report it immediately.

Please provide clear photos and descriptions of where and when the animal was sighted. If possible attempt to contain the animal alive. When handling the turtle wear disposable gloves, wash your hands thoroughly afterwards and be mindful that these turtles can inflict a painful bite.

All reports are responded to as a priority and may result in trapping, surveillance and the removal of confirmed animals.

Red-eared slider turtle

How to identify a red-eared slider turtle

Size

The red-eared slider turtle is a medium-sized fresh water turtle with an adult carapace (shell) length of 12.5 – 28 cm.



Colour

The carapace (shell) is dark green in colour with sometimes yellow and black markings as circular blotches.



The plastron (underside) is bright yellow with black rings, blotches and swirls marking each of the 12 segments.

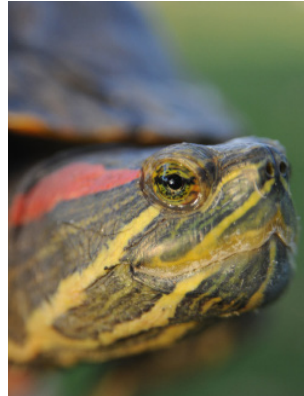


Red-eared slider turtles in the wild will often have a thick layer of algae covering their shell whereas escapees from captivity are often clean and brightly coloured.

Distinctive features

They have a broad red or orange stripe behind each eye with narrow yellow stripes marking the rest of the black body, neck, legs and tail.

They have distinctive long claws on their front and hind legs. They are longer and more prominent in males than females.



Their shell is dome-shaped, likened to the shape of a helmet.

They retract their head straight back into their shell when threatened. Native turtles tuck their neck to one side underneath the shell.



Behaviour

They are almost entirely aquatic, but as they are cold-blooded, they leave the water to sunbathe (also referred to as basking) to regulate their temperature. At night they rest on the bottom beneath the water or float at the surface. They are less active over the winter months.

Does anything else look similar?

Red-eared slider turtles may be confused with the native turtle species Eastern long-necked turtle or the Murray river short necked turtle. To compare the identification characteristics that set the native turtles apart from the red-eared slider turtle visit the Agriculture Victoria website.

Images

DELWP, Laszlo, Zhang Yongxin