

WARNING

Declared Class 1

Red-eared slider turtle *Trachemys scripta elegans*



- Distinctive red stripe behind each eye
- Large specimens can inflict a painful bite
- May carry new diseases
- Dumping in waterways threatens native turtles
- Illegal to keep in Queensland
- Cannot be imported into Australia without a permit
- Classified as an extreme risk to native plants and animals
- Please call **13 25 23** if found

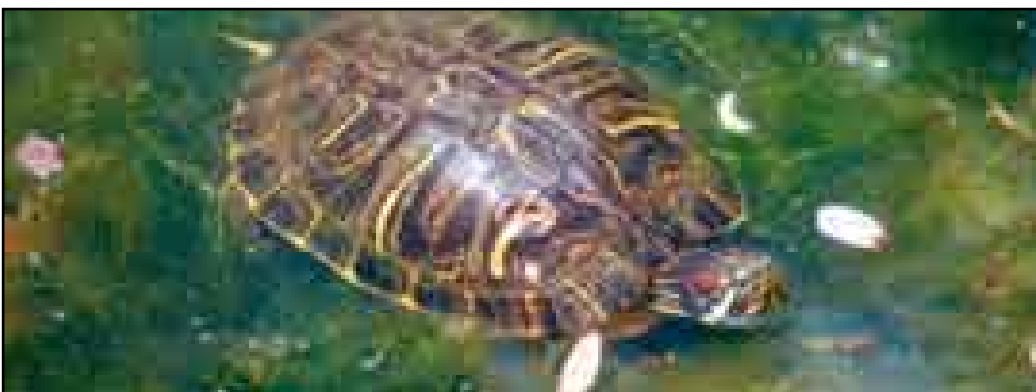
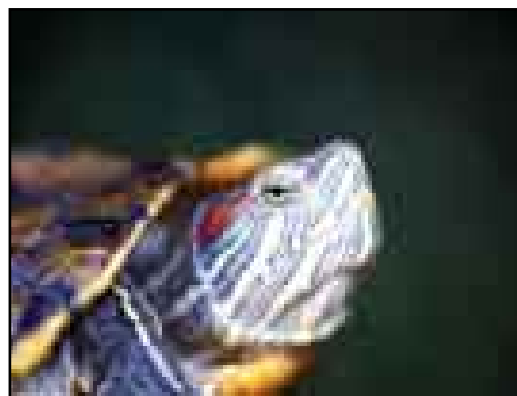
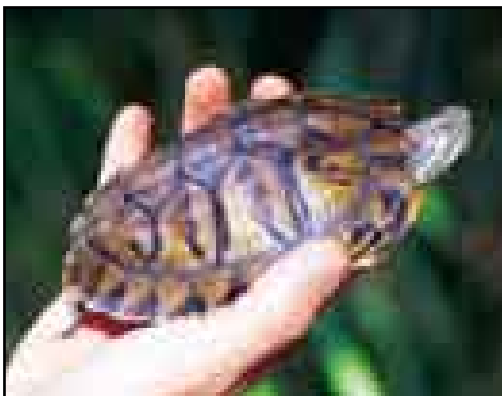


Photo courtesy of John White



Queensland Government

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Biosecurity Queensland

Red-eared slider turtle *Trachemys scripta elegans*

Description

The red-eared slider is a freshwater turtle with a distinctive red stripe behind each eye. There are several common native turtles, but these do not have red stripes on their heads. The red stripes may fade as the turtle ages, however, the finer, pale stripes around the head will remain. The undersides of the red-eared sliders are pale yellow with dark smudges. Turtles can lay up to 70 eggs per year, live for about 40 years, and grow to about 30 cm in length.

Unlike native turtles, the red-eared slider turtle can retract its head straight back into its shell; native species withdraw their heads to the side.

The problem

Red-eared sliders are not native to Australia. However colonies have been found in New South Wales, and it is believed that the turtles may have been imported as aquarium pets in the 1960's and 70's and eventually released into the wild. They are aggressive, and because they have the potential to multiply rapidly and spread throughout Queensland waterways, they could become the most common turtle in our creeks and rivers, replacing our native turtles.

Of additional concern is the potential for red-eared sliders to carry new diseases and pathogens that could kill our native turtles and other aquatic wildlife. Red-eared sliders have established feral populations in South East and Far East Asia, Europe the Caribbean, Israel, Bahrain, Mariana Islands, Guam and South Africa.

It is illegal to keep red-eared sliders in Queensland. They are not allowed to be imported into Australia without a permit and can only be used for public display purposes.

In America and elsewhere many people purchase small, young sliders, only to find that when the animals mature they become quite aggressive, with the potential to inflict a painful bite. At this stage, some people dump their pets into local creeks, where the animals are capable of breeding and, therefore, threatening the survival of other native plants and animals. Based on the Department's assessment criteria, this species is classified as an extreme risk.

What should I do?

If you think you have seen one of these turtles, or have one in your possession, please contact your local Council Pest Management/Environmental Officer or your local Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries Land Protection Officer on 13 25 23.

Early detection of potentially invasive animal species is vital to protect Queensland's multi-billion dollar agricultural industries and our unique natural environment.

For further information visit Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries website <www.dpi.qld.gov.au>.

Declaration details

The red-eared slider is Class 1 declared animal under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. They must be controlled where found. It is also an offence to introduce, keep, import, sell, release, feed or transport this pest without a permit issued by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, attracting fines of up to \$60 000.