

# OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

## INVASIVE SPECIES FACT SHEET



**Common Name:** Red-eared slider

**Family:** *Emydidae*

**Order:** Testudines

**Class:** *Reptilia*

**Species:** *Trachemys scripta elegans*

**Other names:** Red-eared turtle, dime-store turtle

**Origin:** Eastern United States

**Size:** Max. carapace length 11 in.

### Description:

- Head is greenish-gray with a red patch behind each eye and yellowish-white line across the head
- Carapace (upper shell) is smooth, slightly domed and greenish-gray to brown in color with weak serrate edges on the rear marginals.
- May be ornate with yellowish-white colored lines on scutes and ocellis. Young are bright green.
- Plastron (lower shell) is bright yellow with a single dark smudge on each scute. Sometime stains to a brownish-orange color.
- Legs are greenish-gray to black in color with yellow to white colored lines.

### Ecology:

- Found in ponds, lakes and slow moving or still backwaters of rivers
- Diet consists of plants, insects, snails, tadpoles, crayfish, worms and fish

**Status:** Prohibited in Oregon. Large populations are found throughout the Willamette Valley and in other areas of the state. Most are illegally released pets.

**Interesting facts:** Red-eared slider lay their eggs about a month earlier than native turtles and may lay more than once a year. This can tip off predators so by the time native turtles lay their eggs, predators are keyed into nest sites.

**Impact:** Competes with native turtles for food and nesting, basking and cover habitat. Red-eared sliders can transmit parasites and diseases to which our native turtles have no immunity.

In addition to being a threat to native species, small turtles can be threat to human health.

Since 1975, it has been illegal in the United States to sell or distribute turtles with shells that measure less than 4 inches in length.

See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site for more information.

**Action:** Think twice before you buy a turtle as a pet.

Turtles can live a long time—sometimes more than 20 years—and those cute little turtles can grow to the size of a dinner plate,

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requiring large aquariums and regular maintenance.

If you have a pet red-eared slider, DO NOT release it into the wild. Call your local ODFW office for advice.

To report locations of red-eared sliders in the wild, call 1-800-INVADER. In the Willamette Valley, report sightings online on the Native Turtles of Oregon Web site.

**More information:** See Oregon Administrative Rules, Division 56,  
IMPORTATION, POSSESSION, CONFINEMENT, TRANSPORTATION AND SALE  
OF NONNATIVE WILDLIFE



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