

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## RED-EARED SLIDER

*(Trachemys scripta elegans)*



Photo credit: Kristiina Ovaska

### HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

#### DESCRIPTION

Red-eared Sliders...

- Are green with fine yellow stripes on their head, neck, limbs, and tail.
- Have distinguishing red 'ear' patches (may fade to dark brown or yellow) on sides of the head.
- Have a top shell (carapace) that is dome shaped and dark green with light and dark markings.
- Have a carapace length up to 28 cm (11").
- Are yellow on bottom of shell (plastron) with dark blotched markings.

\* Visit BC Reptiles and Amphibians website for more information:

<https://bcreptilesandamphibians.trubox.ca/red-eared-slider/>

**REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES**

**Download the App!**



[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

#### PRIMARY THREAT:

*Red-Eared Sliders are known carriers of diseases that are harmful to humans and wildlife.*

#### SPREAD

The spread of Red-Eared Sliders into ponds and wetlands of B.C. is a result of pet turtles being released by their owners into the wild. Sliders do attempt nesting in southern B.C., but prior to 2015, when six hatchlings were found, there had been no known cases of successful hatches.

Sliders can be found in a variety of freshwater habitats with slow or zero current, muddy bottoms and dense vegetation. These habitats include rivers, swamps, ponds and ditches.

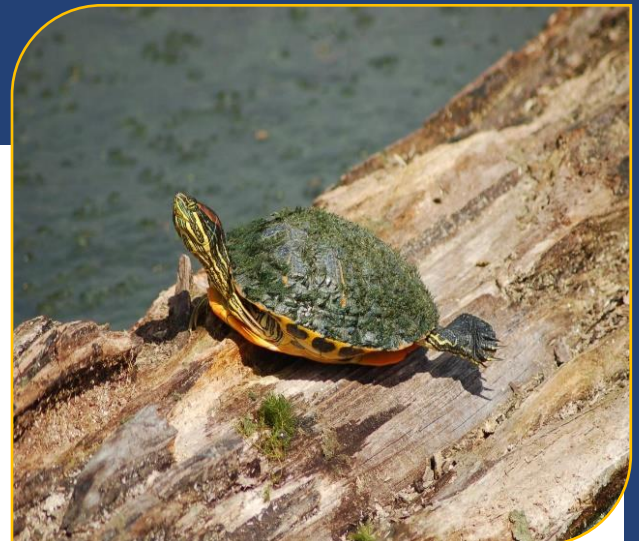


Photo credit: bcinvasives.ca

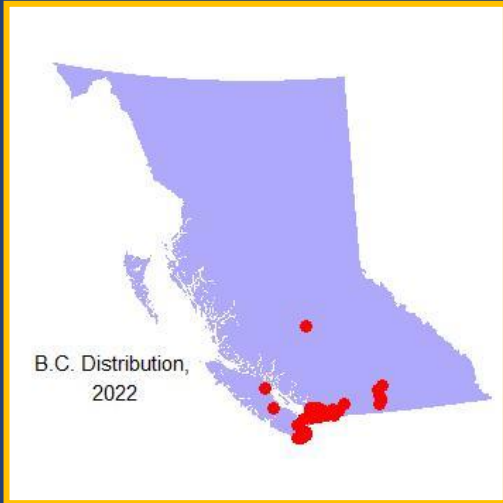
#### DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

The Red-Eared Slider is native to southeastern United States and further south through Mexico, Central America and Brazil. In B.C., sliders can be found on southern Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, the Lower Mainland, and parts of the Southern Interior.

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



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Distribution (March 2022)

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## LOOK-ALIKES:

Red-Eared Sliders may be confused with B.C.'s native Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*). Distinguishing characteristics of the Western Painted Turtle include **bold yellow stripes on head, neck, legs, and tail; no red patch on sides of the head; a red plastron (shell bottom) with dark markings**. Refer to this comparison factsheet for more information: <http://bc reptiles and amphibians.trubox.ca/wpcontent/uploads/sites/1420/2022/01/Turtles-BC-Government.pdf>

Other introduced subspecies of sliders occur in B.C., including the Yellow-bellied Slider (*Trachemys scripta scripta*) and Cumberland Slider (*Trachemys scripta troostii*). Cumberland Sliders are unique for their orange (but not red) plastron; yellow stripe behind each eye; and fewer, wider stripes on the legs, neck, and head in comparison to Red-eared Sliders. The Yellow-bellied Slider has a large yellow blotch behind the eye (mostly females and juveniles), broad vertical bands on side of carapace, a yellow plastron, and narrow yellow stripes on top of forelegs.



Western Painted Turtle

Photo Credit: Kristiina Ovaska



Red-eared Slider



Western Painted Turtle

Photo credit: John White (left), Kip Ledage (right)



Photo credit: Greg Hume

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Before purchasing a pet turtle, consider how you plan to take care of it long term.
- Contact your local SPCA or local turtle rescue organization if you can no longer care for your pet turtle.
- Do not release Red-eared Sliders into the wild.
- Raise awareness about this invasive species in your community to avoid further spread in B.C.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Sliders have a fascinating kind of feeding system called neustophagia, which is similar to the feeding style of the baleen whale. Skimming the pond surface with lower jaw hanging open, a slider catches floating food particles and stores it in its pharynx. The turtle then closes its mouth, expelling water through its nostrils and swallows the remaining food.

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