

Trachemys scripta



Taxon	Family / Order / Class / Phylum
<i>Trachemys scripta</i> (Schoepff, 1792)	Emydidae / Testudines / Reptilia / Chordata

COMMON NAMES (English only)

Common slider

SYNONYMS

Crysemys scripta Boulenger, 1889

Pseudemys scripta Jordan, 1899

Testudo scripta Schoepff, 1792

SHORT DESCRIPTION

A medium to large (20-60 cm) freshwater turtle characterised by prominent yellow to red patches on each side of the head, typically red on *T. scripta elegans*, the most commonly traded subspecies of the 15 described. Carapace and skin are olive to brown with yellow stripes or spots. Males are usually smaller than females and have a long, thick tail. The diet of this opportunistic predator changes from highly carnivorous in juveniles to omnivorous in adults.



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Trachemys scripta is a medium to large North American freshwater turtle.

Photo: Riccardo Scalera

BIOLOGY/ECOLOGY

Dispersal mechanisms

Sliders have the potential to spread throughout waterways. They can live for about 40 years, therefore even if reproduction does not occur, they can survive in the wild for many years.

Reproduction

Courtship and mating may occur in both spring and fall. Nesting in temperate zones occurs from April to July, but in the tropics may occur even during the dry season (December-May). Nests are usually excavated on the shore of a fresh waterbody, but also on sea beaches in Costa Rica. Up to six clutches containing 2-30 eggs may be deposited a year depending on female body size and other conditions. Incubation takes 59-112 days.

Known predators/herbivores

Main predators are rodents and corvids, which can eat eggs and juveniles.

Resistant stages (seeds, spores etc.)

None.

HABITAT

Native (EUNIS code)

C - Inland surface waters

Habitat occupied in invaded range (EUNIS code)

C - Inland surface waters habitats

Habitat requirements

Sliders occur in most freshwater habitats, but prefer quiet waters with soft bottoms, abundance of aquatic vegetation, and suitable basking sites. For a sound hibernation in winter, clean waters with sufficient amounts of oxygen are needed.

DISTRIBUTION

Native Range

Eastern USA and adjacent areas of northeastern Mexico.

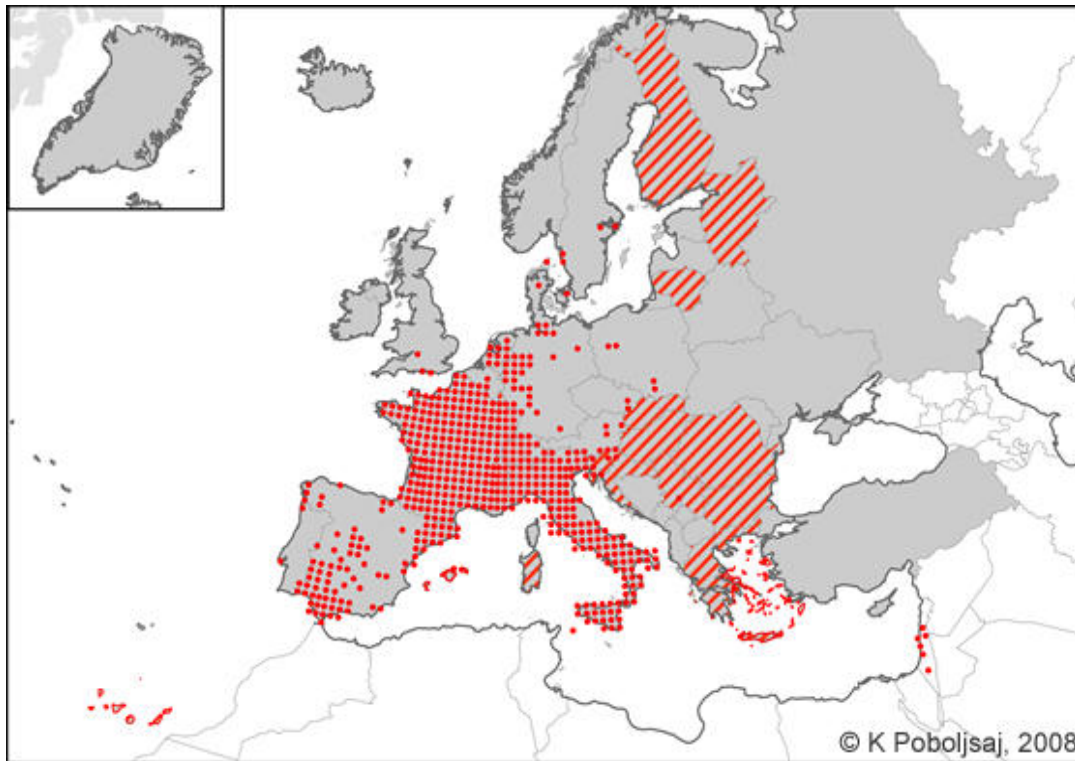
Known Introduced Range

Europe, South East and Far East Asia, the Caribbean, Israel, Bahrain, Mariana Islands, Guam and South Africa. In Europe, occurs in several countries, but apparently breeds only in a few (i.e. Spain, Italy, France).




Trend

The current distribution in most countries is poorly known, but new sites of occurrence are likely to be found following dedicated field surveys. Moreover, notwithstanding the EU import suspension of *T. s. elegans* since 1997, every year new records are reported in most European countries, due to continuous dumping in the wild of the animals still kept as a pet.

MAP (European distribution)



Legend

	Known in country		Known in CGRS square		Known in sea
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INTRODUCTION PATHWAY

Sliders are among the world's most commonly traded pet reptile, and are marketed for human consumption, particularly in Asia. In total, between 1989 and 1997, US commercial farms exported 52 millions individuals. Introductions are therefore a side-effect of the pet and food trade, and are mainly concentrated in urbanised areas.

IMPACT

Ecosystem Impact

Sliders feed on several species of plants and animals, from insects and other invertebrates to all vertebrates, including amphibians and reptiles, small mammals and birds. Competition dynamics with indigenous turtles, particularly with the endangered European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis* are also known to occur for food, basking sites and nesting sites. May also contribute to the spread of diseases and parasites that could affect native turtles and other aquatic wildlife.

Health and Social Impact

May carry diseases harmful to humans and many other species. For example, it is considered a potential vector of Salmonella. In the USA such epidemiological risk has resulted in a national ban of sales of sliders since 1975. Large specimens can inflict painful bites.

Economic Impact

Unknown.

MANAGEMENT

Prevention

The import of *T. s. elegans* has been suspended within the EU through the Wildlife Trade regulations since 1997. However, other replacement taxa have been found being traded since then. An information campaign aimed at raising public awareness of the risk posed by dumping pets in the wild is considered a priority. In some countries (i.e. Italy, Spain, France), live specimens abandoned by pet amateurs are disposed of in rescue centres and zoological gardens.

Mechanical

Sliders can be captured by hand or through various trapping devices. Floating boards used by sliders as basking sites seem very effective when equipped with baited cages on top. Sniffer dogs can be used to detect and remove both turtles and their eggs. Eggs can also be found and removed by following females at nesting areas.

Chemical

None.

Biological

None.

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