

# Red-eared slider

*(Trachemys scripta elegans)*

**Red-eared sliders are a threat to South Africa's wetland eco-systems and the future of our indigenous terrapins.**

**R**ed-eared sliders are freshwater terrapins or turtles from North America. They are found in the Mississippi Valley from Illinois through to eastern New Mexico. They are listed by the IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group as one of the Top 100 Worst Invasive Species.

Red-eared sliders are popular reptile pets across the world. Shipments have arrived in South Africa as researchers have already found abandoned red-eared slider pets in the wild in areas around Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban, Scottburgh and Cape Town.

Provincial legislation prohibits the importation, sale, distribution and keeping of red-eared sliders or red-eared terrapins in South Africa.

These exotic reptiles pose a threat to our indigenous terrapins through disease and parasite transmission as well as competition for similar resources.

They also threaten biodiversity in wetland ecosystems and are known carriers of salmonella which can be transferred to people who handle them.

Male and female red-eared sliders are similar in appearance, but juveniles are more vividly marked than adults.

- **Colouration:** A broad red or reddish-brown stripe situated behind each eye. Distinct black and yellow stripes are present on the head, neck, throat, legs and tail. Hatchlings and juveniles are more vividly marked than adults. The upper shell (carapace) is olive green to grey with thin yellow stripes.



Top: Red-eared terrapins have a distinct red stripe behind the eyes. Right: Juveniles are vividly patterned.

- **Body shape:** Shell flattened and oval in shape. The head is retracted straight back into the shell. Indigenous terrapins fold their head sideways into the shell.
- **Length:** Adults - 25-30cm, hatchlings – 30mm.

## Save our indigenous terrapins

Never mistake the red-eared slider for the following indigenous species:



Marsh terrapin



Serrated hinged terrapin

## What does the law say?

Under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEM: BA) Invasive Species Regulations, red-eared sliders are designated as a Category 1a Invasive Alien Species.

This legislation states that:

- No person may import, trade, keep or breed red-eared sliders.
- Red-eared sliders need to be managed as part of an invasive species control plan.

**iSpot** Report red-eared slider sightings to [www.ispot.org.za](http://www.ispot.org.za)



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