



Pond Slider (*Trachemys scripta*)

Tra-chem-ees scrip-tah



**Photos by Sam Fellows*

Description: Carapace length 5-9", with some larger females being up to 15". A large, semi-aquatic turtle with a carapace typically ranging in color from brown, olive, or olive-brown (and much brighter green in hatchlings) with light and dark markings. The carapace is also weakly keeled (although may be smooth in old specimens), and the plastron is typically pale yellow with variable amounts of dark irregular markings on each scute. The skin on the head, neck, and limbs is brown to olive brown with paler irregular stripes and lines. A distinct red streak runs from behind the eyes on each side of the head, although this may be absent or obscured in older or melanistic specimens.

Taxonomy and Classification:

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Suborder: Cryptodira

Family: Emydidae

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Genus: Trachemys

Species: *Trachemys scripta**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Similar/Confusing Species: Map turtles (*Graptemys sp.*) have topographic lines on the carapaces and scutes. Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) tend to be smaller, lack weakly serrated rear marginal scutes and weak dorsal keels, and have more centralized dark markings on the plastron.

Etymology: Trachemys- Trachys (rough) emys (freshwater tortoise). scripta-scriptura (a writing). elegans (fine or elegant).

Subspecies: Red eared Slider (*Trachemys s. elegans*).

Range & Habitat: In Wisconsin, records exist for Bayfield, Brown, Buffalo, Dane, Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Pierce counties although this species can probably occur throughout the state wherever independent unassisted immigration or pet releases and escapes take place. Tolerates most permanent to semi-permanent bodies of water including ponds, lakes, rivers, streams, marshes, and backwaters.

Habits & Natural History: Sliders are large, aquatic to semi aquatic turtles indigenous to the south central and southeastern United States. These turtles are frequent baskers, and may be seen in numbers basking on rocks, logs, or shorelines, where they will “slide” or dive into the water when too closely approached. As with most turtles in the family Emididae, sliders are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of aquatic plant material and algae, as well as aquatic insects and other invertebrates, small fish, and carrion. In Wisconsin, recent observations and evidence for established populations of this turtle in the state, unassisted immigration into the state of Wisconsin from Iowa and Illinois, as well as archaeological evidence support at least some populations of this species as being indigenous to Wisconsin.

Phenology: As with other Wisconsin turtles, indigenous populations of slider turtles probably begin emerging from overwintering and mating as early as early April through May, and remain active throughout the year through September or October (or sometimes even later in the year if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit). Many Wisconsin turtles begin moving over land and are often encountered during May through early July as they search for sandy nesting sites.

Conservation Status: WI Status to be determined. Not currently regulated by WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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