

# Red-eared Terrapin

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Trachemys scripta elegans*

**AKA:** Red-eared slider, Terapin Clustgoch (Welsh)

**Native to:** Southern USA

**Habitat:** A wide range of still to slow flowing freshwater habitats

Red-eared terrapins have a distinctive red stripe behind the eye and can grow to 30 cm in length. They often use the banks of water bodies to bask. They are wary and will enter the water quickly if disturbed, so they are best observed using binoculars.

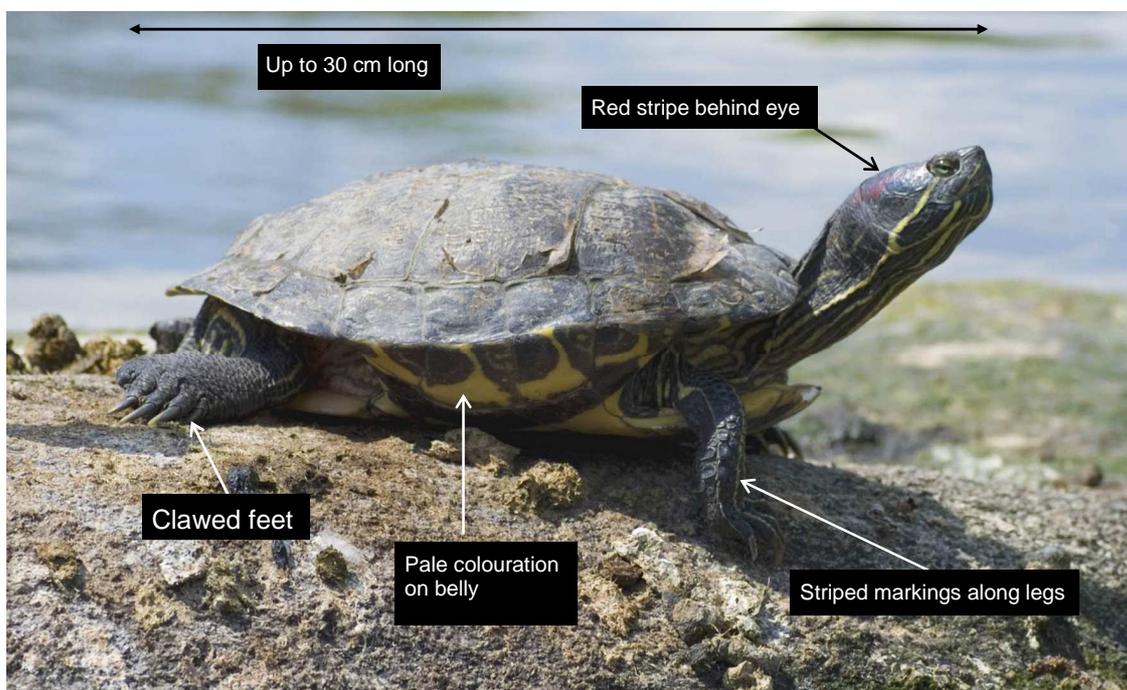
Red-eared terrapins are popular pets and many have been deliberately released into the wild. This was particularly the case during the 1980s. Red-eared terrapins are opportunistic omnivores, and due to their size it is possible that they could predate on native amphibians, fish, water birds, invertebrates and amphibians. They are also known to bask on the nests of waterfowl such as Moorhens and thus interfere with breeding.

Red-eared terrapins can often be seen on ponds and fishing lakes in urban parks, such as those in Cardiff and London. While it is not known whether this species is breeding in Britain, it is considered to be unlikely.

For details of legislation go to [www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation).



## Key ID Features



# Identification throughout the year

Although smaller, juveniles have similar features to adults. Red-eared terrapins are known to have laid eggs in the UK but it is not known if any have hatched.



Juvenile

# Distribution

No breeding populations have been confirmed, but non-breeding individuals have been recorded in some parts of the UK.



Source: Various

# Similar Species

The UK has no native species of terrapin, tortoise or freshwater turtle. European pond terrapins have been recorded in the wild in the west of England and have been shown to be susceptible to competition from red-eared terrapins in France.

## European Pond Terrapin/Turtle Non-native (*Emys orbicularis*)

Range considerably in size from 12 - 38 cm long

Speckled markings instead of stripes on legs



No red stripe behind eye

## Common Snapping Turtle Non-native (*Chelydra serpentina*)

25 - 47 cm long

Large head with hooked jaws

Saw-edged crest on upper side of long tail



Snapping turtles are kept as pets and may be found in the wild as a result of releases or escapes.

### References and further reading:

Arnold, N E & Ovenden D W (2002) "Collins Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe". HarperCollins

Beebee, T and Griffiths, R (2000) "Amphibians and reptiles: A Natural History of the British Herpetofauna". HarperCollins

<http://www.alienencounters.org.uk>

\* *Chelydra serpentina* by Moondigger, Creative Common BY-SA, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Snapping\\_turtle\\_1\\_md.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Snapping_turtle_1_md.jpg)

\* *Emys orbicularis* by M. Kutzli, Creative Common BY-SA, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Emys\\_orbicularis.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Emys_orbicularis.jpg)

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