

## Red Eared Slider Turtle – UPSC Notes

The red-eared slider is a freshwater turtle with a distinctive red strip behind each ear. These turtles spend their time foraging in densely vegetated ponds or basking on logs in the sun. The red-eared slider prefers freshwater lakes, riparian zones, and wetlands with abundant basking spaces, such as logs, rocks, and bird nests. It is commonly found in ponds, lakes, and still backwaters of rivers.

### About Red Eared Slider Turtle

- A major threat to the biodiversity of water bodies is the Red-Eared Slider Turtle.
- Hence, it is known to be a major [invasive alien species](#).
- Due to its colour and size, it is popularly kept as a pet.
- The Red-Eared Slider Turtle is considered to be one of the world's worst invasive species.
- They are released into water bodies by pet lovers as they grow in size.
- Red Eared Slider Turtles are omnivores. They have a wide-ranging diet including plants, insects, snails, tadpoles, crayfish, worms, and fish. Juveniles prefer more protein in their diets and consume more vegetation as they mature.
- Red Eared Slider Turtles feed on plenty of aquatic plants.
- Red Eared Slider Turtles are very aggressive, they produce many offspring.
- Studies have shown that Red Eared Slider Turtles can transfer parasites and diseases to native reptile species.
- Red Eared Slider Turtles can finish rare frogs, fish and a wide range of aquatic species.
- For basking sites, nestling, and food, Red Eared Slider Turtles can out-compete native turtles.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) releases the world's 100 most invasive species, and the Red-Eared Slider Turtle is included in this list.

### Red-Eared Slider Turtle - Threat in India and Other Places

- Northeast India is home to 21 out of 29 vulnerable native Indian species of freshwater turtle and the natural water bodies across Northeast India is threatened by the invasion of Red-eared slider turtles.
- The Nodal Centre for Biological Invasions (NCBI) at Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) is working to prevent the spread of invasive species in Kerala.

- In Australia, this species has been found in New South Wales and Western Australia, Australian Capital Territory, and in Victoria. The breeding populations have been found in Queensland and New South Wales.
- In Australia, it is illegal to release, trade, keep, or import Red Eared Slider Turtles as they are considered to be an invasive species.
- Japan had announced its plans of banning the import of Red Eared Slider Turtles.

## Red Eared Slider Turtle - Origins

- Red Eared Slider Turtles originated from the Gulf of Mexico and in areas around the Mississippi River.
- Their native areas range from the Southeast of Colorado to Virginia and Florida.
- Red Eared Slider Turtles live in slow-running rivers and warm water bodies such as streams, lakes and ponds.
- They grow faster and grow to a large size.
- It is illegal to import and keep these turtles in the European Union and Australia.