

# Red-Eared Slider

Use the case studies, lesson plan, activities, assessment questions, and Aquatic Invader Investigator page to enhance student understanding of red-eared slider turtles and connect these organisms to the community. Assign assessment questions as a homework assignment, or use the questions for classroom discussions or final evaluation.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- **Storyteller**
- **Most Unwanted poster**
- **Lesson: Stone Soup**
- **Assessment questions and answers**

## CASE STUDIES

### Abandoned Terrapins Stalk Lake District

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/10/lake-district-terrapins-mystery>

### Few Options for Nonnative Invasive Species

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/living/2014/11/21/few-options-for-non-native-invasive-species/19342441/>

### Jane Hartline Shifts Focus From the Oregon Zoo to Discouraging Ownership of Exotic Pets

[http://www.oregonlive.com/pets/index.ssf/2010/06/jane\\_hartline\\_shifts\\_focus\\_fro.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/pets/index.ssf/2010/06/jane_hartline_shifts_focus_fro.html)

### Pond Turtles Released Into the Wild

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEShMdU4L2E>

### New Species of Western Pond Turtle?

<http://www.kcet.org/news/define/rewild/reptiles/a-new-species-of-western-pond-turtle.html>

### L.A. County brochure for considering turtles as pets

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/TURTLE%20BROCHURE.COLOR.pdf>

## LESSON PLAN

### Stone Soup

Have students tell a story about a red-eared slider, taking a comic-strip approach! Lesson is available at [MenaceToTheWest.org](http://MenaceToTheWest.org)

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Storyteller

Ask students to make a story up about the introduction of a red-eared slider to the wild. A majority of the red-eared slider population are descendants of illegally released personal or classroom pets. Students can learn about the introduction of animals to a new habitat and how red-eared sliders outcompete for resources. The lasting message behind this activity is that the turtles are not to blame, but it is actually the fault of illegal release. Although pet owners believe that by releasing a turtle they are doing a good deed for the turtle, they may also be doing harm to populations of native turtles. *Read the following stories aloud to your students and have them write their own stories, using these as examples.*

#### 1 Example Story 1, told from the perspective of the red-eared slider:

Meet Bubbles. She was raised in a local pet store with many other red-eared sliders, until one day the pet-store employee came and picked Bubbles out of the aquarium. She was then placed in a box and awaited the journey ahead.

Bubbles was so excited to finally see her owner, a young boy, who pulled her out of the box and put her into a new glass aquarium. Bubbles explored her new home and found that there were no other turtles, which made her very sad.

But the boy took very good care of her over the next few years, and Bubbles was able to grow very big. Eventually, she was too big for her aquarium, and one day the boy put her back into a box to begin another journey. However, this time she was brought to a large lake with sunlight and other animals.

Bubbles flourished in this lake! She was bigger and much more assertive in competing for food and shelter than the turtles already living in the lake, and was able to use all of the best basking sites and share food sources with other turtles that looked just like her.

Bubbles did not mean to harm the native western pond turtles and western painted turtles, but in this environment, Bubbles and other red-eared sliders

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have advantages that allow them to establish a population and displace the native species. That is why it is very important not to release plants or animals into the wild that are not native.

Taking care of animals like Bubbles is a large responsibility and should not be taken lightly. Before getting a pet, be sure to get as much information as possible in order to make an informed decision.

- 2 Example Story 2, told from the perspective of the native species where the red-eared slider is introduced: Read the story “Tony the Turtle,” available at [MenaceToTheWest.org](http://MenaceToTheWest.org).

### Extension and community stewardship

- 1 Conduct the “What’s Living in Your Classroom?” Lesson Plan (survey available at [MenaceToTheWest.org](http://MenaceToTheWest.org)), summarize your results, and share it at a school board meeting.

- 2 Create “Most Unwanted” posters and share them on Facebook or display them at your local library. Lesson Plan available at [MenaceToTheWest.org](http://MenaceToTheWest.org).
- 3 Survey your local pet shops to find out whether they are knowledgeable about invasive species. Provide them with your Most Unwanted poster or materials from the *Menace to the West* toolkit.

### Tony the Turtle

The story “Tony the Turtle” was written and illustrated by high-school students. Learn about the struggles that native western pond turtles and beavers may face when forced to share a pond with invasive critters such as nutria, red-eared sliders, and bullfrogs.



## SPECIES GUIDE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 1 Where did the red-eared slider originate?  
*Southeastern U.S.*
- 2 Where is the North American invasive population?  
*Has spread to western, southern, and eastern U.S.*
- 3 How was the animal introduced to its invasive range?  
*Released pets.*
- 4 Look at this illustration of the red-eared slider in the story “Tony the Turtle.” Would you say it is an accurate illustration? Which characteristics did the illustrator get correct? Are any incorrect?  
*The illustration is inaccurate. It does not have a red stripe on each side of its head, and red-eared sliders do not have red on their legs.*
- 5 What types of habitat are red-eared sliders most commonly found in?  
*Ponds and lakes with still water and sunlight.*
- 6 How are humans involved in the introduction of red-eared sliders?  
*Pet owners release red-eared sliders into the wild when they no longer find them a suitable pet.*
- 7 How do red-eared sliders spread to new habitats?  
*By traveling to a new habitat from nearby.*
- 8 Name three characteristics of red-eared sliders that negatively impact the environment.
  - a They may carry parasites or diseases.
  - b They eat a large portion of food resources.
  - c They outcompete native turtles for basking and nesting sites.
- 9 What are some alternatives to releasing turtles into the wild?  
*Find another person who can care for it, return it to a pet store, consult your local wildlife official, or consult your veterinarian regarding humane euthanasia options.*