

Red-eared slider in Hougang canal

Subject: Red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Reptilia: Testudines: Emydidae).

Subject identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, canal along Hougang Avenue 10; 11 May 2014; 0849 hrs.

Habitat: Urban. Concretised channel in public housing estate. The 10 m wide canal is connected to the Serangoon River which continues in a northeast direction before joining the Punggol Serangoon Reservoir. The water is fresh as the Punggol-Serangoon basin is dammed from the sea.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: A large adult of about 20 cm carapace length was spotted inside the canal. It had rained earlier in the morning and a stream of clear water, about 15 cm deep was flowing in the middle of the canal. The terrapin was moving along the water's edge. Apparently aware that it was being watched, it entered the water and then swam upstream (see accompanying photographs).

Remarks: Despite being a non-native species, the red-eared slider is probably the most conspicuous and most common turtle in Singapore. This species is native to the USA, and hatchlings are imported into Singapore for sale as pets. When these attractive hatchlings grow into comparatively unattractive adults, they are often abandoned by their owners. The red-eared slider is consistently released all over Singapore into canals, ponds and reservoirs. Although it has been observed to reproduce locally, it appears that the feral population is sustained by unwanted pets (Ng & Lim, 2010: 124).

Reference: Ng T. H. & K. K. P. Lim, 2010. Introduced aquatic herpetofauna of Singapore's reservoirs. *COSMOS*. 6 (1): 117-127.



Large red-eared slider in canal along Hougang Avenue 10, moving along the water's edge (left) and in deeper water (right). Photographs by Chua Keng Soon

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