

Successful hatching of red-eared sliders in Singapore

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

Subjects identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Mountbatten area; 19 November 2014.

Habitat: Urban. In the garden of a private residence.

Observers: Karen W. C. Leong & Vikram Mahtani.

Observations: A total of 16 hatchlings with carapace lengths of about 3 cm (Fig. 1) were first found emerging from the ground in the garden on 19 November 2014. In June 2014, a large female example of about 20 cm carapace length (Fig. 2) was observed by the contributors' house keeper excavating a hole in the soil next to the garden wall (Fig. 3). She then laid eggs in the hole and covered it up afterwards.

The housekeeper had found the female terrapin wandering near a canal at Dakota housing estate on 20 April 2014, and brought her back to the house on the same day. Before the hatchlings had emerged, she was the only terrapin in the garden. Of the 16 terrapins that hatched, five of them were eaten by their mother, and one drowned in the adjacent pond when it got stuck at the intake pipe of the filter. It is not known how many clutches of eggs were laid.

Remarks: The red-eared slider is perhaps the most common terrapin in Singapore. A native of North America, most individuals seen in the wild in Singapore were believed to be abandoned pets or released as religious offerings (Baker & Lim, 2012: 125). These terrapins have been observed courting and laying eggs in Singapore, but there were apparently no records of any hatching from eggs laid in the wild there (Ng & Lim, 2010: 124).

Trachemys scripta is known to nest from April to July, laying up to five clutches of eggs per season. Each clutch consists of two to 23 eggs, with 10 being the average number. The incubation period lasts from 60 to 80 days (Bonin et al., 2006: 399).

Even though it happened under captive conditions, the present record shows that red-eared sliders are capable of completing their entire life cycle in Singapore. This is a strong indication that some individuals seen in the wild may not have been liberated by people.

References:

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Fig. 1. Two of the neonate red-eared sliders that hatched in November 2014. Dorsal view of a hatchling on the left, and ventral view of another on the right.



Fig. 2. The large female terrapin that laid the eggs in the garden.



Fig. 3. A view of the part of the garden from where the hatchling terrapins had emerged.

Photographs by Karen W. C. Leong