MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

RED-EARED SLIDER

Trachemys scripta elegans

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Reptile: freshwater turtle
NATIVE REGION	Southern United States and northern Mexico
HABITAT	Slow water with plants and sunny basking spots
DIET	Omnivore: water plants and small water animals
SHELL LENGTH	8–13 in (adults; Maryland DNR)
WEIGHT	Up to about 7 lb (adult females)
LIFESPAN	20–30 years in the wild
STATUS	Least Concern (IUCN, 2011); introduced in Maryland
OUR SLIDER	Shelly



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- It is named for the red stripe behind its eye and the way it slides off rocks into the water.
- Sliders bask in the sun to warm their bodies.
- They have no teeth. A sharp, horny beak bites and tears their food.
- A female digs a nest on land and lays her eggs there. The parents give no care after that.
- Sliders are not native to Maryland. They arrived here when pet turtles were released.

Words to know

Carapace: The top part of a turtle's shell.
Plastron: The bottom part of a turtle's shell.
Bask: To lie in the sun to warm up.
Introduced: Brought to a place by people, not found there naturally.

Think about it

1. How did the red-eared slider get its name?
2. Why do sliders bask on rocks and logs?
3. What is the difference between a carapace and a plastron?
4. Where does this water turtle lay its eggs?
5. Are sliders native to Maryland? How did they get here, and why does that matter?

Draw it

Draw a slider basking on a log. Label its red stripe, carapace, plastron and webbed feet.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

STANDARDS · GRADES 3–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-3 · 3-LS1-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.G · 3.1.3.A**

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/red-eared-slider/ · **Sources:** Animal Diversity Web; Maryland DNR turtle field guide; USGS / NOAA species profile; IUCN Red List, 2011 publication
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 3-LS4-3 (3.1.3.G) · 3-LS1-1 (3.1.3.A)
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RED-EARED SLIDER

Before and after your visit

Page 2 of the Red-eared slider fact sheet · © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the red-eared slider live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Carapace ☐ Plastron ☐ Bask ☐ Introduced

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the red-eared slider.

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?
☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching
☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Southern United States and northern Mexico. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Omnivore: water plants and small water animals. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.
- Why do sliders bask on rocks and logs?
- Are sliders native to Maryland? How did they get here, and why does that matter?

4. Exit ticket.
One thing I learned: _____
One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/red-eared-slider/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.
Grades 3–4 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-3 · 3-LS1-1** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.G · 3.1.3.A**
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