



red-eared turtle

Trachemys scripta

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Testudines
Family:	Emydidae

Features

The red-eared turtle ranges from five to 9 1/8 inches long. It has a red stripe behind each eye. The carapace (upper shell) appears oval from above and the rear margin of the shell is saw-toothed. The toes are webbed. The carapace is brown or olive and the legs, head, and tail have yellow stripes. Some older adults become uniformly dark.

Natural History

The red-eared turtle lives in quiet water with a muddy bottom and much vegetation. It eats plants, fish, amphibians, crustaceans, mollusks (snails, slugs, and others), and insects. It feeds in early morning and late evening. It rarely comes to land, except to lay eggs or bask in the sun. The mating season lasts from March to June. The female digs a nest on land in late spring and deposits five to 22 eggs, the number depending on her size (the larger her size, the greater the number of eggs) and age. Hatching may occur in late

summer or early fall, but some turtles will overwinter in the egg and hatch the next spring.

Habitats

Mississippi River; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; interior rivers & streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

uncommon; native

Iowa Range

lower reaches of large southeastern rivers and bodies of water adjacent to them (isolated populations up to 50 miles from the Mississippi River in Iowa, Cedar, Skunk, and Des Moines Rivers)

Bibliography

Habitats CD-ROM. Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic*