

REPORT OF ALIEN INVASIVE TURTLE, THE RED-EARED
SLIDER *TRACHEMYS SCRIPTA ELEGANS*
(WIED-NEUWIED, 1839) (TESTUDINES: EMYDIDAE),
IN IKARIA ISLAND, GREECE

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Published online: April 5, 2020

Abstract

The presence of the invasive alien turtle *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Wied-Neuwied, 1839) (Testudines, Emydidae) is reported for the first time from the island of Ikaria (Greece).

Key words: Aegean islands, Ikaria, red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans*.

Ikaria host 11 reptile species: *Mauremys rivulata*, *Dolichophis caspius*, *Telescopus fallax*, *Natrix natrix*, *Pseudopus apodus*, *Stellagama stellio*, *Hemidactylus turcicus*, *Mediodactylus kotschyi*, *Ophisops elegans*, *Anatololacerta oertzeni* and *Ablepharus kitaibelii* (Allain & Bateman 2018). Until now *Mauremys rivulata* was the only terrapin species found on the island. The red-eared slider has a natural range in the eastern US and northeast Mexico. It is a voracious omnivorous species that is found all over Europe and is considered a threat for indigenous species; it has been found to compete for basking sites, food and nesting sites with the native pond turtles (Polo-Cavia et al. 2009). It has been traded since the 1950's being an extremely popular pet worldwide (Ficetola et al. 2012). Accordingly, *T. scripta* is expected to be present in all Greek cities that have pet shops and urban parks with ponds. In this case, given that the only pathway of introduction is pet trade, raising awareness among citizens for the biological invasion issues seems to be a one-way approach (Adamopoulou & Legakis 2016).

For this research only photos were taken and no specimens were captured. Fieldwork was performed according to international standards and the conditions described in the Presidential Decree PD 67, 23//30181 for field research in Greece.

The final stretch of the Myrsonas River (Fig. 1) is densely inhabited by the *Mauremys rivulata* terrapin. A large specimen of *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Fig. 2), probably an adult female, was observed on the 7th August 2018, in apparent sympatry with a large group of native terrapins. It has been observed that during the summer the terrapins get very close to the shore to receive food from tourists who frequent the adjacent beach. The social behavior of this terrapin within the population of *M. rivulata* suggests a not recent introduction. According to the guiding principles adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2002) prevention is the priority response as well as early detection. New sites of

Trachemys scripta at Ikaria Island



Fig.1. Outfall of river Myrsonas.



Fig.2. *Trachemys scripta*, Ikaria Island.

incursions need to be quickly detected in order to accelerate management responses (Genovesi 2005). The release of exotic animals is illegal and involves the use of large human and economic resources for the removal and management of trapped animals (Zuffi et al. 2015). In addition, the local inhabitants should be informed on the issue of the release of invasive alien species (Grano & Cattaneo 2015). Therefore it would be important to eradicate the specimen and to affix signs indicating the ban on the release of allochthonous species, justifying the reasons.

Acknowledgments

A special thanks to Cristina Cattaneo for her fundamental presence in my life and in my research.

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