




# Management Measurements for Widely Spread Species (WSS) in Northern Ireland

*Trachemys scripta scripta, Trachemys scripta elegans & trachemys scripta troostii*

As per Article 19 requirement of EU Regulation 1143/2014  
*on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species*

*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*

1. Yellow – bellied slider *Trachemys scripta scripta*
2. Red-eared slider *Trachemys scripta elegans* &
3. Cumberland slider *Trachemys scripta troostii*

<p><b>Yellow – bellied slider - description</b></p> 	<p>A species of turtle with a shell (carapace) length of approx.13- 30cm when fully grown. It has a large yellow blotch behind the eye which is most evident in juveniles and females. Broad vertical bands may be visible when viewed from the side. The underside of the shell is yellow and there are narrow yellow stripes mark the front surface of the front legs.</p>
<p><b>Red eared slider - description</b></p> 	<p>Semi-aquatic freshwater ‘turtle’ that can grow up to a carapace length of 30cm. Shell usually dark green to black with greenish or yellowish markings. Distinctive red stripe behind each eye and irregular yellow stripes along the legs.</p>
<p><b>Cumberland slider - description</b></p> 	<p>Differs from the nominate subspecies by having a yellow oblique patch behind each eye, fewer and wider stripes on the limbs and neck, hollow black spots on most of the boney external plates of the underside and horizontal lines of yellow and black on the rear of the thighs.</p>
<p><b>NI Status</b></p>	<p>Present in many catchments and urban ponds and waterways. Differentiation between the 3 types not always verified. However, the Northern Ireland climate is not expected to be warm enough for successful breeding. Present in zoos, collections and kept widely as domestic pets. For current distribution visit <a href="#">NBN Atlas Northern Ireland</a>.</p>
<p><b>Pathways</b></p>	<p>Accidental and deliberate releases from captivity</p>

<b>Aim</b>	To minimise further deliberate/accidental releases into the environment. Eradicate wild population in Northern Ireland.
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove any reported wild individuals, prioritising vulnerable sites (e.g. ASSIs).</li> <li>2. Minimise introduction/releases in new areas.</li> <li>3. Remove populations from sensitive areas where causing problems.</li> <li>4. Reduce the number of animals present in captivity to zero.</li> <li>5. Pet owners can keep as 'companion animals' until end of natural life provided they don't release or allow to escape.</li> <li>6. Reduce distribution across N.I. by 50% by 2030.</li> </ol>
<b>Prevention</b>	
<b>Border and pathway actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 1143/2014, it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the environment.</li> <li>- Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation it is also an offence to import into the EU, keep, breed, transport (to, from or within the EU; except to facilitate eradication), place on the market, use or exchange this species - <b>unless under specific exemption or permit.</b></li> <li>- ID sheet developed and deployed to border staff – Border Force, Portal Inspectors (DAERA), Plant Health Inspectorate (DAERA/FS), etc.</li> <li>- Liaison with Wildlife Crime Northern Ireland (PAWNI) to ensure species is not being traded.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advice will be provided to establishments holding zoological collections and aquaria, mobile zoos, animal encounter operators, animal rescue centres and pet owners of the following:</li> <li>- Owners of pets can keep their animals in secure facilities, until the end of their natural lives, as long as they are not allowed to breed or escape.</li> <li>- Owners unable to keep animals in secure facilities can dispose of them by being humanely euthanised by a vet.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Animal encounter operators can keep, transport and exhibit existing animals, until the end of their natural lives, as long as each facility is secure.</li> </ul>
<b>Early detection and rapid response</b>	
<b>Surveillance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A new, dedicated surveillance mechanism is not necessary as a number of existing recording schemes allow reporting of this species;</li> <li>- In Northern Ireland species records are entered to CEDaR online recording via <a href="http://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI">www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI</a> or via the Invasive Species Ireland website - <a href="http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting/">http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting/</a>. Entering a record generates an email to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Invasive Non – Native Species (INNS) Team.</li> <li>- The Botanical Society of the British Isles Map Scheme compiles comprehensive distribution maps for plants across the UK.</li> <li>- The Biological Records Centre (<a href="http://www.brc.ac.uk">www.brc.ac.uk</a>) collects presence records of all wildlife species in the UK through a network of voluntary recorders on <a href="#">iRecord</a> online or by the <a href="#">iRecord app</a>. The BRC provides the opportunity to download distribution data and visualise it as customisable maps, via the National Biodiversity Network Atlas Northern Ireland (<a href="https://northernireland.nbnatlas.org/">https://northernireland.nbnatlas.org/</a>).</li> <li>- Relevant Government agencies such as DfI Roads/Rivers, AFBI, Loughs Agency, Forest Service and Northern Ireland Environment Agency record the presence of invasive non-native species as a part of their work and will then initiate management measures for WSS on their own sites.</li> <li>- Non-Governmental Organisations (e.g. Rivers and Fishery Trusts and Boards, Wildlife Trusts, etc.) undertake surveys of freshwater habitats and report incidental sightings of invasive non-native species and will then initiate management measures for WSS on their own sites.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All N.I. Councils to also record and report presence of invasive non-native species on their estates and initiate management measures for WSS on their own sites.</li> </ul>
<b>Rapid response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The species is present and widespread in Northern Ireland, although the climate is not thought to be warm enough for successful breeding. Discovery of individuals in new areas would not necessarily trigger a rapid response. However, efforts will be made to ensure that local stakeholders are made aware of the individuals and their requirement to take steps to remove for euthanasiation.</li> </ul>
<b>Long-term management</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A long-term management plan is not a priority.</li> <li>- Under current climatic conditions, as far as we are aware, all 3 turtle species are unable to breed in the wild, except possibly for some discrete locations with favourable micro-climates. Climate change would need to bring about Mediterranean conditions in the UK for the species to successfully reproduce and necessitate a long-term management plan.</li> <li>- Raise public awareness about illegal release into N.I. water bodies.</li> <li>- Raise awareness that misguided 'rescues' from wild places, 'transporting' them to a place where they would be 'kept' are also all illegal activities.</li> <li>- Guidance on the management of slider turtles is available on the Invasive Species Ireland website - <a href="https://invasivespeciesireland.com/species-accounts/established/freshwater/red-eared-yellow-bellied-and-cumberland-sliders">https://invasivespeciesireland.com/species-accounts/established/freshwater/red-eared-yellow-bellied-and-cumberland-sliders</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Research</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not a priority for research as effective methods for trapping red-eared sliders exist with a wide-range of commercial turtle traps available.</li> </ul>	

Photos: © GB Non-Native Species Secretariat 2018



For further information:

Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
Biodiversity and Conservation Science Unit  
Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Gasworks Business Park  
Belfast  
BT7 2JA

Tel: 028 9056 9558

Email: [invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk)

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



An Agency within the Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



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