

INTRODUCTION

Red-eared sliders and other freshwater turtles have been remarkably successful in colonizing freshwater habitats. In some areas, the density of these omnivorous predators is truly staggering. Their ability to survive and thrive in such areas is due, in part, to their relatively high intelligence and adaptive skills.

However, no matter how successful they are in the wild, they are ill prepared for the neglect and poor treatment often experienced in captivity at the hands of children. Ultimately, it is a parent's responsibility to ensure this neglect does not occur. Turtles are not cheap, living play toys or substitutes for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Red-eared sliders and other freshwater turtles need proper care, attention, and a captive environment that may cost a significant amount of money. Of the several million hatchling red-ears sold outside of the United States, nearly 90 percent die in the first year. A large percentage of the adults sold in the general pet trade also die within their first year following capture. Considering that they are relatively easy reptiles to raise in captivity, this is an abomination.

When kept properly, red-eared sliders and other freshwater turtles are attractive, interesting animals easily capable of delighting their owners. A well-designed vivarium (a reptile enclosure that simulates the animal's natural environment) can provide a display as eye-catching and fascinating as any tropical fish aquarium. In fact, several aspects of freshwater habitats can be successfully simulated in one's home. These simulations will unlock a world not readily accessible to most people.

This book provides all the necessary information for you to successfully keep, display, and breed red-eared sliders and other popular freshwater turtles. A number of exotic freshwater turtle species can be maintained under the same general guidelines, as long as the vivarium temperatures are adjusted to meet the requirements of the species.