

## Don't release pet turtles into the wild: Org.

### OUR READERS WRITE

It is known by biologists, conservation authorities, government at all levels, and community groups of volunteers who are involved in the work of preservation of turtles of all species, which are classified as at risk, that releasing pet turtles into the wild is a danger to other wildlife and our environment.

Many people, mostly youngsters, are interested in having a pet turtle but do not have the knowledge of what is involved in caring for one.

These turtles that are being purchased as pets are the Red-eared Sliders which are an invasive species in Canada. They originated from the Mississippi River Waterways of the United States and are now living on every continent except Antarctica.

Even though they are small as juveniles, they grow into large adults with complex needs that pet owners don't see or know about. This leads to their unfortunate and ILLEGAL release into the wild. They are effective competitors over native turtles and are capable of spreading diseases to other wildlife.

Red-eared sliders may be mistaken for native species like the Western Painted Turtle, but can be identified by the red markings either side of the head.

Did you know it is prohibited under Canadian federal Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations made under the Fisheries Act, to release any aquatic species into a region or body of water where it is not indigenous? Putting a stop to pet release is the most effective way to protect native species and habitats from invasive red-eared sliders.

Think before you buy. Plan to care for your pet turtle long term. Although cute as babies, they grow into adults with complex needs and can live up to 40 years. They not only need a proper diet of food, but as they grow, they need a much larger aquarium with proper cleaning among other requirements.