

FOCUS ON CONSERVATION

Hispaniolan Southern Slider / Hispaniolan Elegant Slider (*Trachemys decorata*)



Conservation of Hispaniolan Southern Slider in Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve

The Antillean Terrapins comprise a group of at least four species of freshwater turtles with a discontinuous distribution in the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas. The Hispaniolan Southern Slider (*Trachemys decorata*) is endemic to the south paleoisland of Hispaniola (south of the Cul de Sac Plain – Neiba Valley). The Central Antillean Slider (*Trachemys stejnegeri*) occupies suitable habitat on the north paleoisland. As for other important endemic Antillean groups, such as Todies (small birds in the genus *Todus*) and Rock Iguanas (*Cyclura* spp.), Hispaniola is the only island with two different species in each of those genera.

The Hispaniolan Southern Slider is a moderately sized freshwater pond turtle. Males can reach 220 mm in carapace length, whereas larger females can reach 320 mm. The carapace is light brown and the plastron is yellow with scattered dark ocellated ovals. The skin is grayish brown with black-bordered yellow stripes, including the supratemporal stripe or “ears.” This turtle inhabits brackish and freshwater lakes. Habitat destruction, pollution, and over-harvesting threaten the existence of this species, which is included as “vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List.

In the Dominican Republic, the Hispaniolan Southern Slider has a natural distribution that corresponds to a large degree with that of the critically endangered Ricord’s Iguana (*Cyclura ricordi*), and the conservation of both species is intrinsically tied to the conservation of the Jaragua – Bahoruco – Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve. Grupo Jaragua works for the conservation of these turtles, their natural habitats, and associated biodiversity by implementing and supporting conservation efforts in the Biosphere Reserve.