



New Evidence of Red-eared Slider, *Trachemys scripta* (Wied-Neuwied 1839), Reproduction in Galicia (Spain)

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The Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans* Wied-Neuwied 1839), is an aquatic turtle native to North America (Seidel and Ernst 2006), that has been introduced in many countries via the pet trade. In Spain, it is a common species in many wetlands (Martínez-Silvestre et al. 2015). Reproduction has been reported in many areas, especially in the southern part of the country (Pérez-Santigosa et al. 2006, 2008). In Portugal, the ability to reproduce in captivity and under natural conditions has been experimentally confirmed in the northern regions of the country (Alves 2013), and successful breeding in the south has been recorded (Martins et al. 2018).

In Galicia (northwestern Spain), the species has been observed in various aquatic environments, including ponds, rivers, reservoirs, and mining holes, in its four provinces (Ayres 2001). Reproduction of *T. s. elegans*, in captive semi-natural conditions in Galicia, has been known since the late 1990s (Galán 1999).

In summer 2016, a hatchling was detected in the Galician part of the international area of the Miño River, close to the northern border with Portugal (Dominguez-Costas and Ayres

2018). Another hatchling was captured in summer 2019 in the protected wetland, Gandaras de Budiño, Pontevedra Province, Galicia (unpubl. data).

On 14 July 2023, we detected a hatchling *T. s. elegans* basking on a log in a reservoir of the Miño River in Castrelo de Miño, Ourense Province, northwestern Spain (42.325000, -8.028000) (Fig. 1). A photographic voucher has been submitted to the Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida (UF 194655), and the identity of the species was confirmed by Enrique Ayllón of the Spanish Herpetological Association (AHE).

In recent years, we have observed large populations of alien turtles, including *T. s. elegans* in this area (unpubl. data), leading us to suspect that reproduction is occurring. The discovery of this hatchling supports that hypothesis. The number of reports of alien turtles in the region laying eggs has increased in recent years (unpubl. reports), so successful reproduction likely is occurring at other sites. Further research is necessary on this important conservation issue.

Acknowledgements

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Figure 1. Hatchling Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) in the Castrelo de Miño Reservoir, Ourense, Spain. Photograph by César Ayres.

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