



First Record of a Free-ranging Red-eared Slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Wied-Neuwied 1839), on Euboea Island, Greece

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Invasive alien species have been recognized as a major threat to biodiversity (e.g., Strayer 2012; Doherty et al. 2016; Pyšek et al. 2020) with alien herpetofaunal species posing a significant negative socio-economic impact in certain cases (Kraus 2015; Soto et al. 2022). In Greece, seven different alien freshwater turtles have been recorded to date, with the Red-eared Slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Wied-Neuwied 1838), being the most widely distributed species (Kalaentzis et al. 2023). The species co-occurs with both native Greek freshwater turtles; the European Pond Terrapin, *Emys orbicularis* (Linnaeus 1758), and the Balkan Terrapin, *Mauremys rivulata* (Valenciennes 1833) (Urošević 2014; Christopoulos et al. 2021; Christopoulos and Zevgolis 2022; Kalaentzis et al. 2023), with which it competes for food resources and basking sites (Cadi and Joly 2003, 2004; Polo-Cavia et al. 2010; Lambert et al. 2019). The Red-eared Slider has been labeled

as one of the most damaging invasive species in the world (Lowe et al. 2000).

Euboea (Evia) is the second largest Greek island and the sixth largest in the Mediterranean Sea. However, the fauna of the island is less studied in comparison to other Aegean Islands, where most of the ecological and evolutionary studies have been focused (Lymberakis et al. 2018; Christopoulos et al. 2019; Strachinis 2021; Pafilis and Kapsalas 2024). Herein I present the first record of a single free-ranging Red-eared Slider on Euboea Island.

On 26 April 2024, a male Red-eared Slider (Figs. 1 & 2A) was captured with a dip net in a natural residual riverine pool in the Messapios River (38.578874, 23.666837), a torrent located in central Euboea, Greece, that flows intermittently during rainy periods and dries out in the summer (Fig. 2A). A photographic voucher was submitted to the

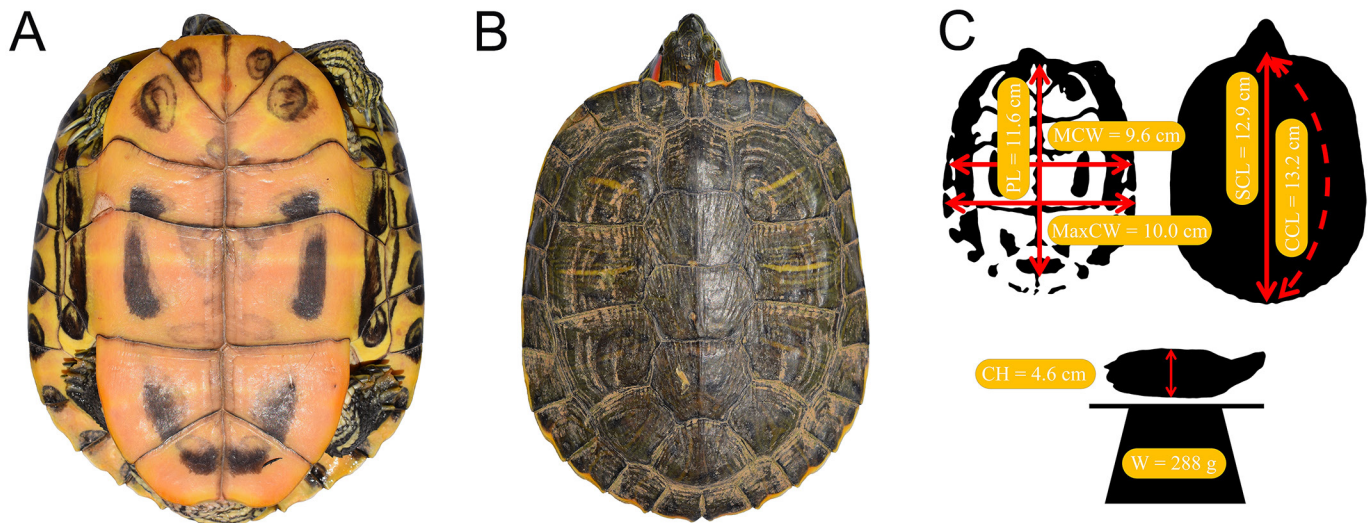


Figure 1. A male Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) captured on Euboea Island, Greece: (A) Ventral view; (B) dorsal view; (C) measurements of shell size and weight: Plastron length (PL), mid-carapace width (MCW), maximum carapace width (MaxCW), straight carapace length (SCL), curved carapace length (CCL), carapace height (CH), and weight (W). Photographs by Taxiarchis Danelis.

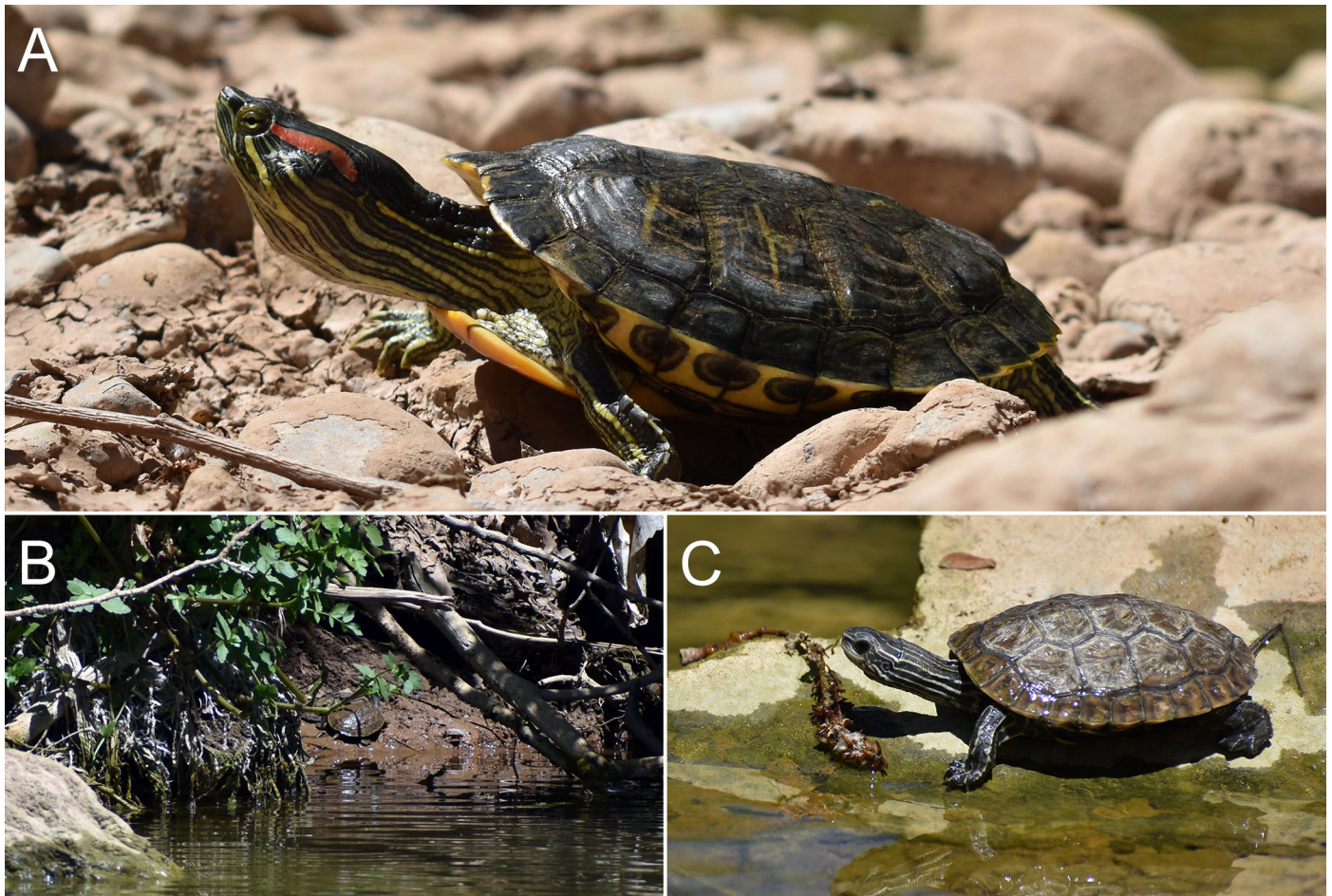


Figure 2. Freshwater turtles basking along a residual riverine pool of the Messapios River, Euboea, Greece: (A) An adult male Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*); (B) an adult and (C) a hatchling Balkan Terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*). Photographs by Taxiarchis Danelis.

Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC80.3.115.18) and the identity of the species was confirmed by Dr. Petros Lymberakis (NHMC). The turtle was found coexisting with an unreported breeding population of Balkan Terrapins (Pafilis and Maragou 2020; Broggi 2023) (Figs. 2B–C). The alien turtle was removed and, in cooperation with the municipality, translocated to a suitable artificial cistern in the central square of Psachna (38.578155, 23.642420), which prevented the animal from being euthanized. The slider likely was released by someone after being held as a pet, as the Red-eared Slider was the most common turtle in the pet trade until its importation was prohibited by the European Union (Kraus 2009).

This is the first record of the Red-eared Slider on Euboea, bringing the total number of reptilian and amphibian species documented on the island to 39 (Valakos et al. 2008; Christopoulos et al. 2019; Strachinis 2021; Pafilis and Kapsalas 2024). Furthermore, this is the tenth Greek island where the species has been observed (Urošević 2014; Adamopoulou and Legakis 2016; Grano 2020; Drakopoulos et al. 2021; Christopoulos and Zevgolis 2022; Kalaentzis et al. 2023).

Recent discoveries along the Messapios River including rare and important species such as the Noble Crayfish, *Astacus astacus* (Linnaeus 1758) (Karaouzas et al. 2022), Evia Barbel, *Barbus euboicus* Stephanidis 1950 (Kalogianni et al. 2023), European Otter, *Lutra lutra* (Linnaeus 1758) (pers. obs.), and the Balkan Terrapin highlight the scientific and ecological value of this largely unexplored stream. However, the Messapios faces threats from pollution (Pyrgaki et al. 2022; Lymperopoulou et al. 2023) and negative local perceptions influenced by flash floods (Karkani et al. 2021), and might be susceptible to further degradation if species such as Red-Eared Sliders become established. Continued monitoring will allow for efficient management and prevention of this species and others in the region (IPBES 2019).

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