

# RED-EARED TURTLE A THREAT TO WATERBODIES

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

**Tiny terror:**The red-eared slider turtle is a favourite among pet lovers because of its small size. **Special arrangement**

After the Pink Bloom, an alien flower that choked the Avala Pandi canal at Perambra, yet another invasive species is posing a threat to the biodiversity of waterbodies in the State. This time, it is a cute red-eared slider turtle, a huge hit with pet lovers.

A few days ago, Adithyan D. Thambi, a Class 6 student of St. Vincent Pallotthi Central School, Kalathode, got a medium-sized turtle while he was fishing in a canal at Kalathode. He posted his catch on Facebook, which was noticed by Sandeep Das, a researcher at the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI). Identifying the turtle, an exotic and major invasive species, he alerted the boy and cautioned him against releasing it back to the waterbody.

Scientifically called *Trachemys scripta elegans*, is a favourite of pet lovers because of its small size and colour, noted T.V. Sajeev, Senior Principal Scientist and Research Coordinator, KFRI.

“The turtle can even be kept in a matchbox. But it grows fast. Adult turtles require lots of aquatic plants. They are omnivores. Many find it difficult to keep them as they grow bigger, and release them into waterbodies. This turtle is considered one of the world’s worst invasive species,” noted Dr. Sajeev.

## Illegal in many places

Originally from the area around the Mississippi river and the Gulf of Mexico, they live in still and warm waterbodies such as ponds, lakes, streams, and slow- running rivers. They pose a major threat to native turtle specials, as they grow large, produce more offspring, and are aggressive. They out-compete native turtles for food, nestling, and basking sites.

As they eat plants and animals, they can finish off a wide range of aquatic species, including fish and rare frogs. They can also transfer diseases and parasites to native reptiles. In Australia and the European Union, it is illegal to import and keep these turtles.

The turtle found in the Kalathode canal has been referred to the Nodal Centre for Biological Invasions (NCBI) at KFRI.

“The KFRI has been active in alien invasive species research for over a decade now. We had started with the case of the fast spread of an alien invasive climber, *Mikania micrantha* — the mile-a-minute weed. We attended to the case of the Giant African Snail outbreaks, which occurred in more than 200 locations in Kerala in the past five years.

Currently, the KFRI has the NCBI, which restores landscapes invaded by alien species and mounts early detection and rapid control of alien invasions,” said KFRI director Syam Viswanath.

## Plea to public

The NCBI has started a massive survey and restoration efforts to remove the red-eared slider turtle from the wild. It is also working on discouraging pet shops from selling the species. People who spot the turtle can contact NCBI at 0487 2690222.

Subscribe to The Hindu digital to get unlimited access to Today's paper

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

\*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper, crossword and print.

You can support quality journalism by turning off ad blocker or purchase a subscription for unlimited access to The Hindu.

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Crack