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Erstnachweis einer natürlichen Vermehrung der Rotwangen-Schmuckschildkröte (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) auf der griechischen Insel Kos

First record of the red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) breeding in the wild on the island of Kos (Greece)

Abstract

During a herpetological survey in April 2006 the authors focused on the native *Mauremys rivulata* and the non-native red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). The latter was first seen by one of the authors (JB) in a large pond in 1993. The red-eared slider has been widely introduced throughout Europe and it is said to have had a negative impact on native flora and fauna. For Greece, the red-eared slider is reported from the mainland (Athens), Crete, Zakynthos and Kos. At first *Mauremys rivulata* was hard to locate. Nevertheless several mature and juvenile specimens were found in their natural habitat. *Trachemys scripta elegans* was observed in a large pond near the main road at the junction to Pyli. This pond was occupied by ducks and some geese. In the pond some big eels (*Aguilla aguilla*) were seen. The shrimp (probably *Atyaephyra desmarestii*) and a non-native fish species, the mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) were very abundant too. One adult male and a female slider and also nine adult *Mauremys rivulata* were found in this pond. The sliders were ignored by the *Mauremys rivulata* and no interaction was observed. One of the authors (AB) found a young turtle on debris in the water. This turtle appeared to be a juvenile slider. It had a bite mark in the marginals, which could have been a turtle bite. Later a second mature female red-eared slider could be caught nearby.

Conclusions:

- There is no feral population of *Trachemys scripta elegans* on Kos.
- *Trachemys scripta elegans* is capable of surviving and breeding on the Mediterranean island of Kos.
- It is not expected that *Trachemys scripta elegans* will be able to establish a population and will cause environmental problems. The sliders have to deal with the same dangers as the native *Mauremys rivulata*, such as traffic, agricultural activities, feral cats and predation by birds.

The authors believe that the negative impact on the environment due to human activities will be much bigger than the problems caused by feral red-eared sliders ever can be!

Key words

Testudines: Emydidae, *Trachemys scripta elegans*, invasive species, hatchling in the wild of Kos, Greece

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