

STATE OF NEW YORK

6621

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 18, 2025

Introduced by Sen. HARCKHAM -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Environmental Conservation

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to prohibiting the breeding, sale, trade, purchase, importation, and exportation of red-eared slider turtles

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

- 1 Section 1. Legislative intent. 1. New York is a significant partic-
2 ipant in the global marketplace for the red-eared slider turtle, one of
3 the world's 100 most invasive species, according to the International
4 Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
5 2. Though native only in U.S. southern states, the red-eared slider is
6 now considered invasive on every continent except Antarctica due to the
7 global pet trade.
8 3. Because red-eared sliders can live up to 40 years in captivity and
9 will continue to grow during that time, pet owners often release them
10 into the wild, or the turtles escape enclosures, which has led to the
11 national and international proliferation of the species.
12 4. Due to their long life, resistance to disease, and voracious forag-
13 ing, red-eared sliders outcompete other species, disrupt habitats and
14 pose a grave threat to biodiversity wherever they reside outside their
15 natural range.
16 5. Although it is illegal for a pet owner to release a red-eared
17 slider into the wild in New York, the regulation is unenforceable, and
18 the commerce in red-eared sliders is unabated, resulting in the continu-
19 ing spread of red-eared sliders in waters ranging from Buffalo to New
20 York City's parks.
21 6. New York's participation in the international marketplace for red-
22 eared slider turtles has made the state and its people unwitting partic-
23 ipants in the global spread of one of the most invasive species on the
24 planet.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 7. It is in the best interest of the state that the breeding, sale,
2 trade, purchase, importation, and exportation of red-eared slider
3 turtles be prohibited, and that the state use its authority to assist in
4 all efforts to prevent further introduction of red-eared slider turtles
5 statewide, nationally, and internationally.

6 § 2. The environmental conservation law is amended by adding a new
7 section 11-0541 to read as follows:

8 § 11-0541. Breeding and sale of red-eared slider turtles prohibited.

9 1. For the purposes of this section, "red-eared slider turtles" shall
10 mean the species trachemys scripta elegans.

11 2. No person, firm, partnership, corporation, or government entity
12 shall knowingly breed, sell, purchase, import, export, distribute,
13 transport or otherwise trade red-eared slider turtles.

14 3. This section shall not apply to:

15 (a) zoological parks and aquariums accredited by the association of
16 zoos and aquariums;

17 (b) wildlife sanctuaries, as defined by subdivision thirty-two of
18 section 11-0103 of this article;

19 (c) research facilities, as defined by the Animal Welfare Act, 7 USC.
20 Section 2132(e), licensed by the United States secretary of agriculture;

21 (d) licensed veterinarians and incorporated humane societies, animal
22 shelters, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and animal
23 welfare organizations in temporary possession of wild animals;

24 (e) state universities, private colleges or universities, and state
25 agencies working with wild animals;

26 (f) wildlife rehabilitators licensed pursuant to the provisions of
27 subdivision three of section 11-0515 of this title who are tending to
28 sick, injured, or abandoned wild animals;

29 (g) a person having custody of a wild animal solely for the purpose of
30 transporting it to a licensed veterinarian, wildlife rehabilitator,
31 humane society, or other entity authorized to handle or treat wild
32 animals pursuant to this section; and

33 (h) nature centers engaged in bona fide environmental or conservation
34 education and research, as determined by the department.

35 4. The department may adopt rules and regulations necessary to imple-
36 ment the provisions of this section.

37 § 3. This act shall take effect on the sixtieth day after it shall
38 have become a law.