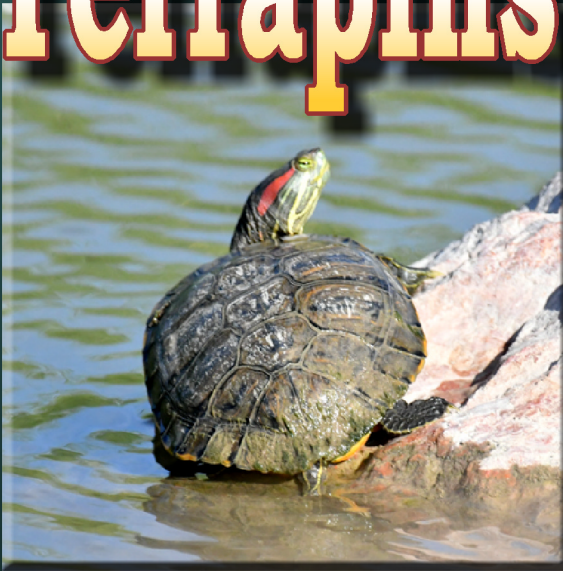
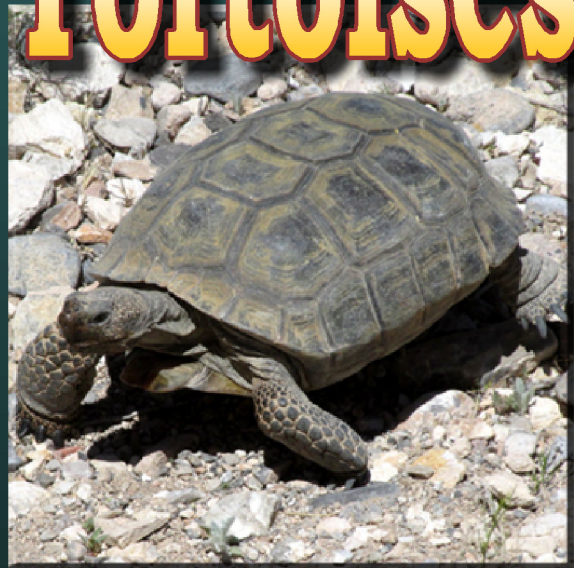


# TESTUDINES (Turtles)

## Terrapins



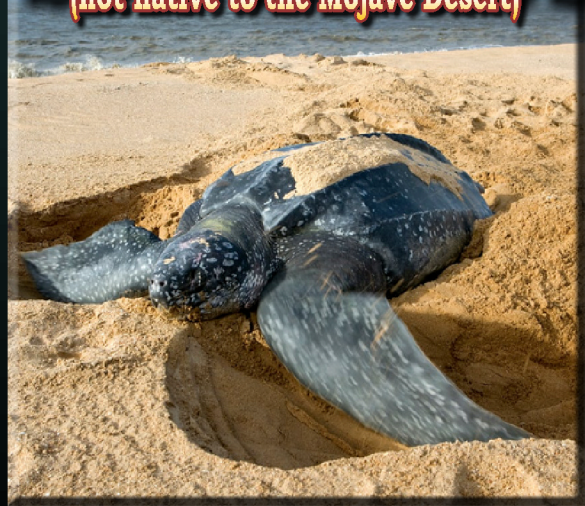
## Tortoises



## Softshells



## Sea Turtles (not native to the Mojave Desert)



# Family **EMYDIDAE** (Terrapins)

## Red-Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)

Measurements:

Average Length: 7"

### Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

distinctive red stripe on the side of the head; brown to olive green in adults (juveniles bright green); slides off basking spot into water, thus the descriptive group name "pond slider"

### Notes:

common in still, warm, aquatic waters (ponds, swamps, streams, etc.); native range extends from se CO, east to VA, south to FL; feral elsewhere due to accidental or intentional release; most popular pet turtle species; eats mainly aquatic plants, but will also consume insects, small fish, etc.; 1 of 3 subspecies of *T. scripta*

Mojave presence: feral



enjoying a peaceful  
aquatic lifestyle

Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



communal basking spa

Clark Co. Wetlands Park;



proudly showing off its  
distinctive red ear patch

Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



swaddled in the finest  
of algal apparel

Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV

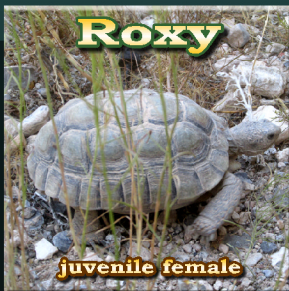


# Family TESTUDINIDAE (Tortoises)

## (Desert Tortoise) (*Gopherus agassizii*)



Red Rock NCA; Nevada



RRNCA Tortoise Habitat; NV

### Measurements:

Average Length: 12"    Average weight: 10 lbs

### Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

terrestrial; males slightly larger than females, and possess a longer gular (foreward-most scute on plastron)

### Notes:

rare and reclusive (considered Threatened), many have been relocated to protected habitats; native to the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts west of the Colorado River; diurnal to crepuscular; strictly herbivorous (e.g. grasses, flowers, cacti, fruit); brumates in winter

**Mojave presence:** year-round



RRNCA Tortoise Habitat; NV



RRNCA Tortoise Habitat; NV

### Comments:

With habitat destruction due to urban growth, and with relocation to conservation locations, it has become increasingly rare to encounter a desert tortoise in the wild. The best opportunity for Mojave Desert visitors to see and appreciate these tortoises is in the spring through fall at the [Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area](#) tortoise habitat at the visitor center.

Hugo, a favorite with guests, was a pet that was abandoned in a backyard and left with only a bag of dog food to eat (not customary cuisine for a tortoise)! Consequently, he grew to an abnormally large size (33 pounds), flattened carapace, and extensively large gular! Thus, he is not representative of the species.

More typical is Mojave Max who weighs in at a more fitting 12 pounds, and can be expected to entertain guests well into his eighties!

In the tortoises' best interest, it is not prudent to pick them up, as they will dispense their precious--and hard to replace--water supply to ward off handlers. However, since they are particularly vulnerable to being squashed while slowly crossing a road, a helping hand is better than the alternative! Talk to the pedestrian softly, let him know you're there to help, then pick him up gently just off the ground (tortoises don't like heights) and carry him to safety in the same direction he was going. It is certain he will appreciate your kindness!

# Family TRIONYCHIDAE (Softshells)

## Texas Spiny Softshell (*Apalone spinifera emoryi*)

### Measurements:

Average Length: (m) 7" (f) 13"

### Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

round, flat, leathery, somewhat flexible carapace, brown to olive in color, usually with yellow edge; fleshy, tubular, pig-like snout; webbed feet; (m) short, blunt spines on front edge

### Notes:

nominate subspecies, *A.s.spinifera*, common in US Midwest in rivers, lakes, irrigation ditches, etc.; *A.s.emoryi* introduced to Colorado River system (native to TX, NM); feeds mainly on crayfish, snails, aquatic insects, small fish, etc., and some plant material; highly aquatic, can breathe and respire under water, thus can stay submerged for extended periods

**Mojave presence:** rare; mainly along Col. River drainage basin



Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



Lorenzi Park; LV, NV