

How can Citizen Science benefit educational provisions?



Suzie Simpson



University of
Kent



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Have you seen turtles in the UK?



Take part in our research on the distribution of released pet turtles in UK waterbodies. Submit your sightings of turtles to our survey and find out more on our website: www.turtletally.co.uk

Turtle Tally UK Citizen Science Project



Website: www.turtletally.co.uk

Contact us: turtletallyuk@gmail.com

University of
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Turtle Tally UK Citizen Science

- 6th year running!! (launched 2019)
- Addressing released pet turtle issue
- Mapping distribution, numbers and species released
- JISC survey format online – easy access through website or share QR codes (www.turtletally.co.uk)

Aims:

- Educate and raise awareness
- Contribute to current datasets
- Understand the extent of issues to propose potential management strategies

Other supporters:

- ARG UK
- Canals and Rivers Trust
- Sea Life UK
- British Herpetological Society
- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC Trust)
- North Wales Wildlife Trust





Red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)

Yellow-bellied slider
(*Trachemys scripta scripta*)



River cooter (*Pseudemys* spp.)



Cumberland slider (*Trachemys scripta troostii*)



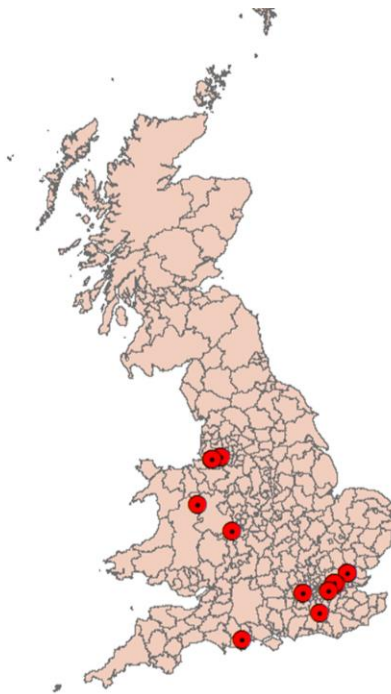
Yellow-bellied/Red-eared slider hybrid



Map turtle (*Graptemys* spp.)

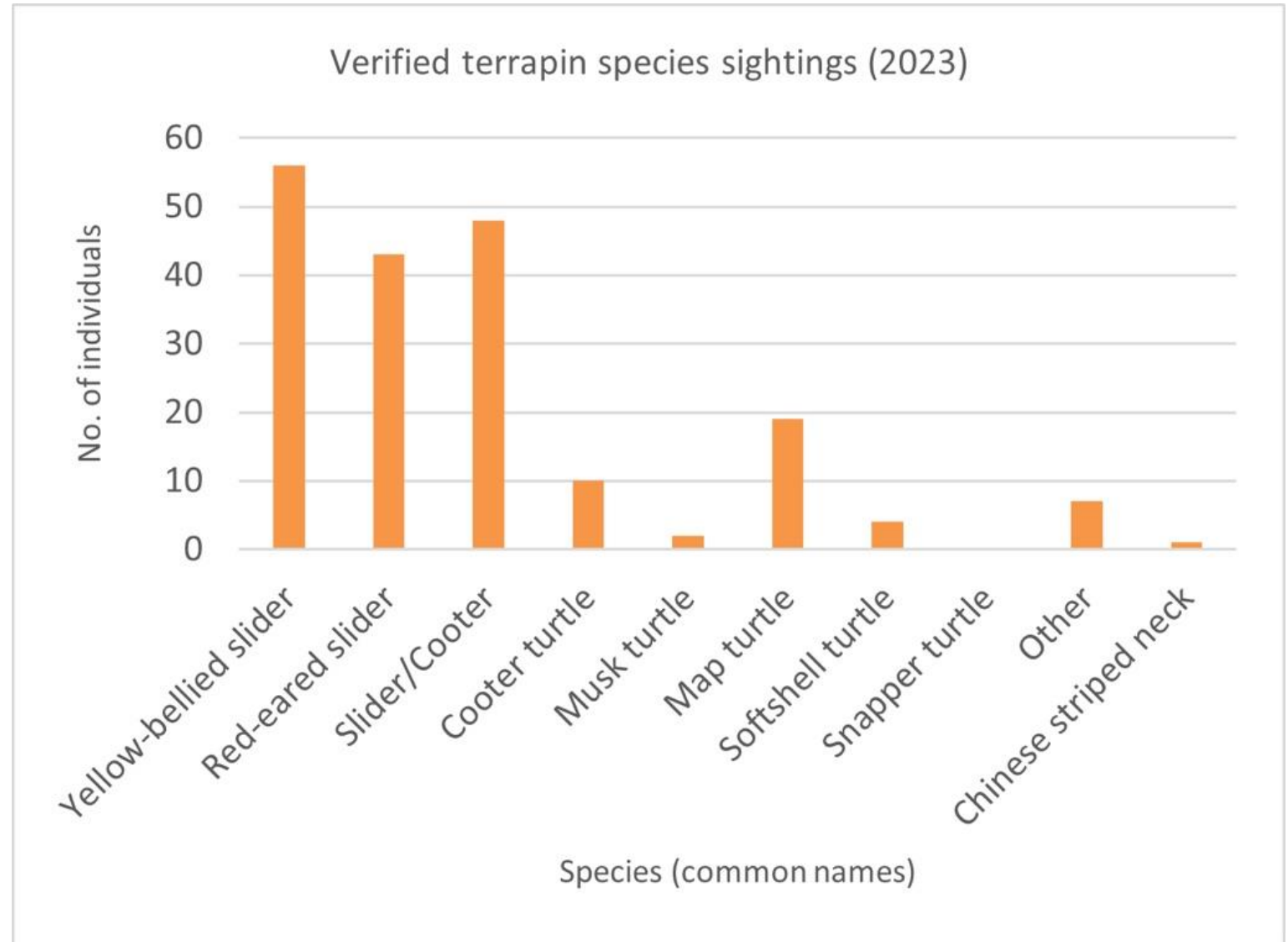
Survey so far...

- 2019 – 24 sightings
- 2020 – 55 sightings
- 2021 – 227 sightings
- 2022 – 368 sightings
- 2023 – 224 sightings
- Consistently clear hotspots

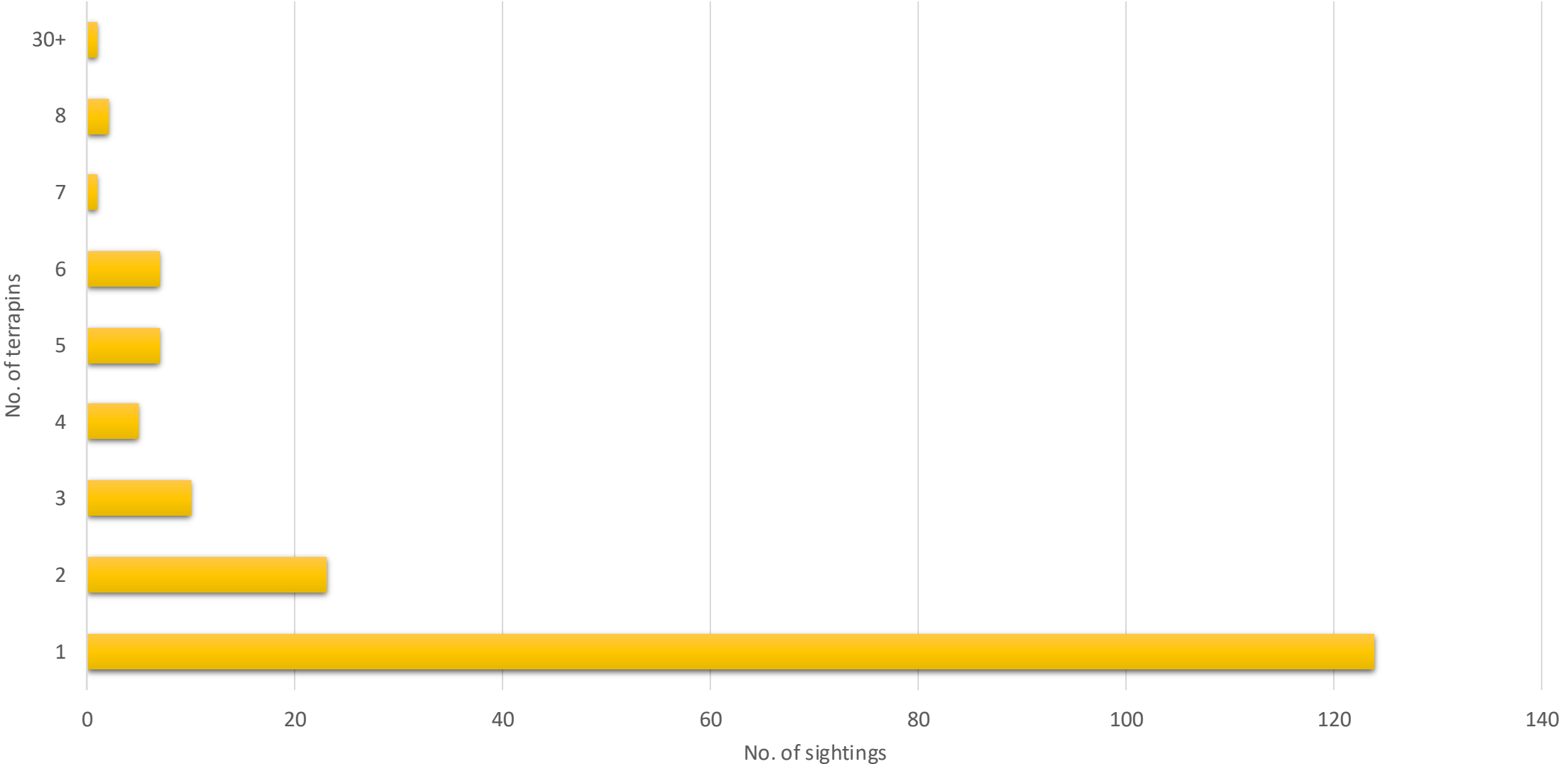


Last year...

- *Trachemys scripta* spp.
- Most commonly observed
- Ban timeframe vs. lifespan
- *Pseudemys* spp. Common
- Musk turtles harder to observe
- Softshell and snapping turtles

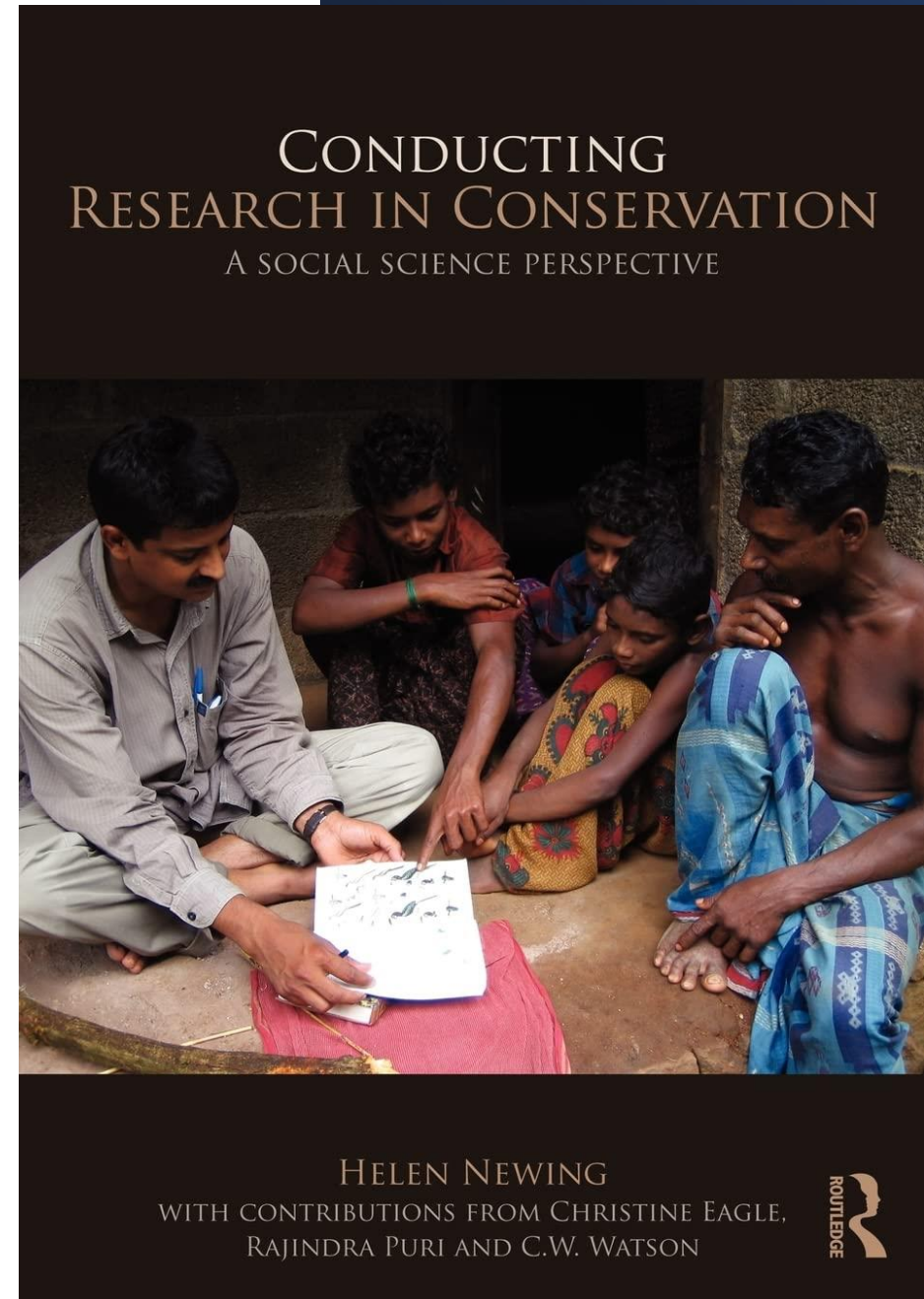


Number of terrapins seen per sighting



Citizen Science or Community Science (CS)

- Share the potential with students
- More jobs now in this field
- The ease to create surveys
- The types of surveys and appropriate formatting
- There are good and bad surveys!
- Platform provision through university or college
- Do have limitations ie. fees and extent of resource may be restricted



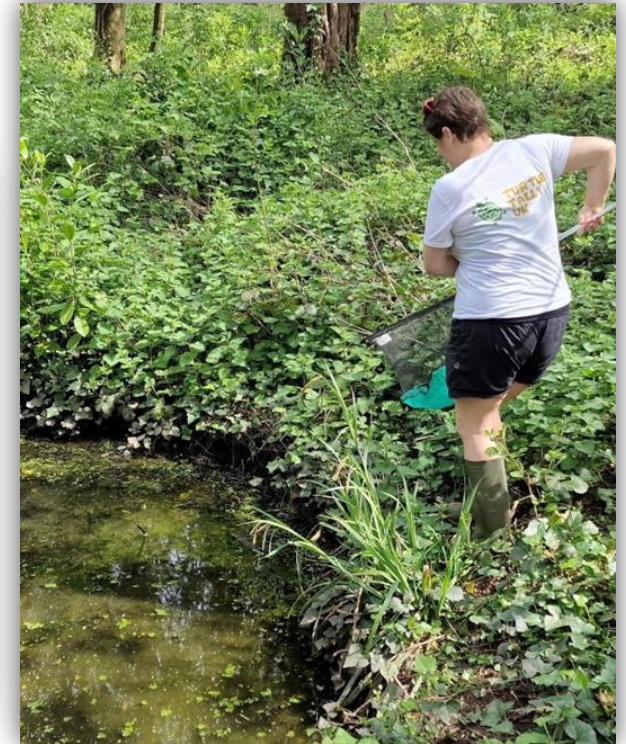


How is this contributing positively
to the wider community?

Bear in mind: We are role models for our students
They are learning from us as individuals

Rescues and removals

- Student involvement
- Learn about licences and legislation to do this work (risk assessments!!!)
- Talking to stakeholders and the public





Support, advice and guidance

People need help too...

- Website
- Answers to questions
- Legislative links
- Guidance documents on temporary housing
- Collaboration with other organizations who also need help on the topic

Examples: Angling Trust and Southwest Lakes

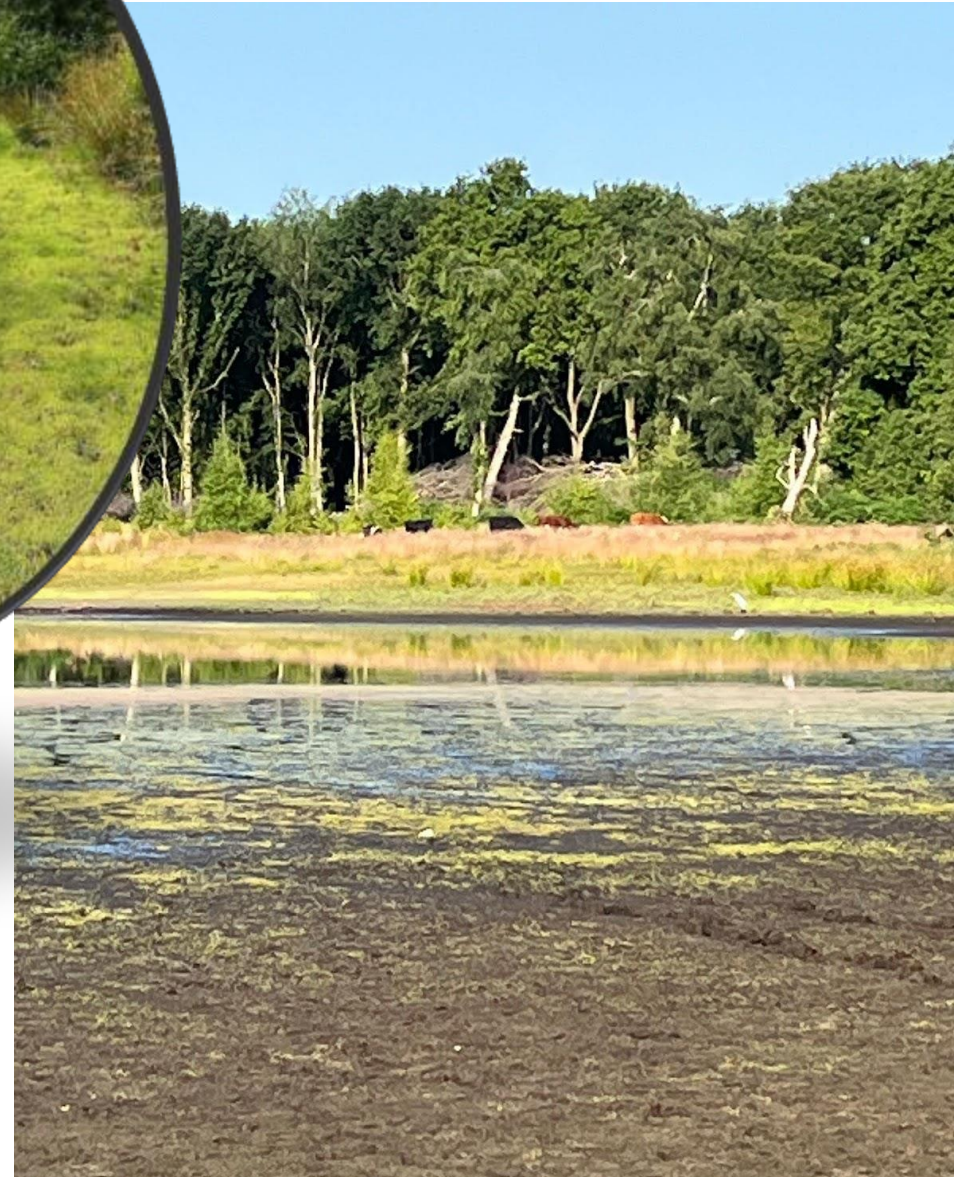
Photo credit: Caroline Mullan and Robert Ellis



Conservation

Brown Moss Reserve (SSSI RAMSAR Site)

- Paddleboard minimised damage
- Water levels low, interchangeable
- 9 individuals sighted
- Breeding and reproduction



Myth busting!

"They eat all the ducklings"

"They harm the wildlife"

"They're breeding"



bringmethenews.com/minnesota-life...



[Scott Rykken](#)

Photo credit: Jon Mitchell

'Claudia'

- 6 years + released
- 10kg common snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)
- Obese
- Maldon, Essex



Faecal sampling

- 'Claudia' has confirmed what was suspected ie predate birds
- Seed dispersal commonly seen with terrapins



Health Assessments

Can be done within labs at the college

We have the National Centre for Reptile Welfare too.

Faecal analysis (parasitology)

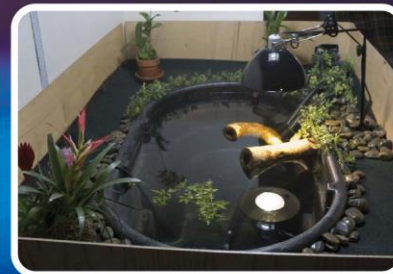
- Captive vs. wild
- **Cloacal swabs** (bacteriology)
- Fungal cultures and salmonella

Depending on your resources and experience:

DNA extractions and PCR processing to identify species.



Terrapins can live for up to **30 years**, and require specialised care including sufficient space to swim and areas to haul out and bask under heat lamps.



Terrapins have been popular pets since the 1990s. They are small when young and cheap to buy! However, they don't stay small forever and can go from fitting in the palm of your hand to the size of a dinner plate.




Educational Partnerships


- Collaboration with NCRW
- Educational tours
- Plans to expand educational program
- Student work experience and talks

SEA LIFE
Manchester

The Terrapins' Story



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Think carefully before buying any pet

I'm moving to a new house & my new landlord won't allow pets.

I lost my job and can't afford to keep a terrapin.

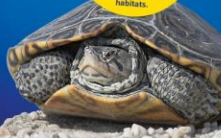
I got my terrapin for my 10th birthday & am off to college next year and can't take him!

No one can take him, so I've got no option but to release him. I'm sure he'll be fine.

It's illegal to release non-native species into the wild. They can impact or outcompete native species and ecosystems. The terrapins themselves can suffer if conditions are not the same as their native habitats.

Here at Sea Life Manchester and at our centres throughout the UK, Terrapin Displays are at maximum capacity with rescued or re-homed terrapins. If you are aware of a terrapin who urgently needs re-homing, please speak with a member of the team and we will help you explore the options available.

We are also looking for help to see how many terrapins are living in the wild. If you spot one please send in your sighting to the Turtle Tally UK at: www.turtletally.co.uk




Media: Positive messages



BBC 'Fluffy' coverage

College, staff and student benefits

Staff

Continual Professional Development

Potential to complete postgraduate research (funded)

Students

Public engagement

Training specialized skills and fieldwork

Further postgraduate opportunities

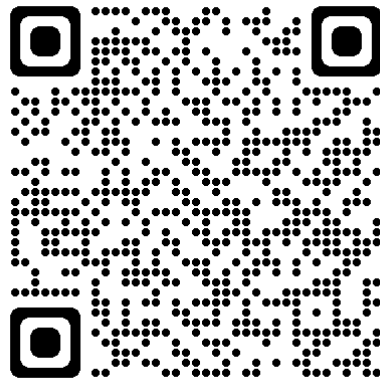
College

- Collaboration with industry professionals and organisations
- Wider visibility for the college
- Further specialism in herpetological topics
- Contribution to the public and the wider national community



Thank you for listening!

Please share and get involved...



Project lead: Suzie Simpson

- Website: www.turtletally.co.uk
- Email: TurtleTallyUK@gmail.com

