

## SLIDERS - VIGILANCE IS VITAL.



“What on earth is that?” mused a sharp-eyed early-morning walker at Tomato Lake in Belmont. The strange animal was reported to the Department of Agriculture, who, with help from a number of other organisations, eventually caught it and determined that it was a yellow-bellied slider turtle, native to America. She proved to be in very good condition, showing, perhaps, that she had not been in the wild for very long. She was carrying over 20 eggs. Exotic turtles are a threat to WA as they can establish breeding populations and upset the balance of the natural ecosystem. In addition, they could spread disease and parasites not present in the local animals.

How did she get into Tomato Lake? It is illegal to keep exotic reptiles privately in WA, illegal to bring them into the State, and illegal to release them in the wild. How did this animal’s former owner get around our biosecurity regulations?

In this instance, a prompt report from a vigilant member of the public enabled the animal to be captured and continued surveillance has shown (hopefully) that there was only the one. If any reader is aware of any people who hold reptiles illegally, please urge them to surrender the animals to the authorities. Every effort will be made to house surrendered exotic reptiles in facilities authorized to hold them.