

ALISO CREEK RED EARED SLIDER REMOVAL PROJECT

This project was started in 2015 by Aliso Creek Turtle Rescue. Its goal is to remove a sufficient amount of the invasive red eared slider turtle, too lower or stop breeding and to cut down this population drastically. This study was started because of a hatchling western pond turtle that was found near the Aliso Creek. Currently the study is not aiming at removing the sliders, but is still being setup. At this point we have a population estimate of 102 sliders in the creek. We are still coming out with our western pond turtle data, and so far, we have a ton of recorded sightings and observations. This data should be released on a separate document hopefully by June of 2017. We are also in the midst of collecting western pond turtle and red eared slider nesting data. This data should be released around January 2018, because both species nesting seasons are practically over, and won't start up until June/July 2017. We are currently talking to agencies about taking removed turtles. Hopefully we can start officially removing turtles by January 2017. Public volunteering is a goal of this project. We love public help, and are working our best to get the public involved. Public involvement includes monitoring opportunities, collecting of turtles with the guidance of an Aliso Creek Turtle Rescue worker and management of money/collections.

Specifics

Turtle Species

During this project we have observed around 40 western pond turtles, around 100 red eared sliders, possibly two map turtles, and one spiny softshell. With the exception of the western pond turtles all of these species are invasive and non-native. We assume that all of these turtles have been released by uncaring pet owners, as they are all common pets. Especially with the sliders. Reaching sexual maturity at around two, being relatively aggressive, and having a tendency to take up space sliders are one of the most invasive species of turtles in the world.

Survey spots

Currently we focus on three main survey spots. Due to safety purposes we cannot give their exact locations out here.

Data

Our current data is plentiful. We have gathered information on every aspect of these turtles in the Aliso Creek. We hope to release our data on western pond turtles in general in the Aliso Creek by June of 2017 and we hope to release our slider data even sooner (March-April 2017). Our nesting data will not be available for around another year. The soonest it could come out is in October of 2017, but we assume it will come out around January 2018. Our population estimates are publicized. We have estimated the population of red eared sliders in the Aliso Creek to be at around 102 individuals. We have tagged one individual. Our western pond turtle population estimates should be available when we release our general western pond turtle data around June 2017.

Where are turtles will go

We hope to find a place within the next few months that will take in the sliders we capture. The Reptile Zoo in Fountain Valley and the California Fish and Game Services are both organizations we have contacted and are currently talking to.

Capture methods

We will use a variety of trapping methods. The first we will try to use is hoop netting. This technique has proven very effective especially in surveys regarding bigger turtles and cooters. Some other methods may also include the use of above water level traps with concave sides and the use of a long mesh lines that can trap turtles within a certain area. Some of the turtles we capture may be hand caught.

Adoptions

Adoptions will play a significant role in this study. Hopefully we can find some individuals that can take in the turtles we capture and house them. Individuals that receive turtles for adoption will only be trusted volunteers or scientists. Due to the fact the sliders were released by pet owners into the creek, we cannot just let anyone buy them in fear they may do the same and thus start the processes over again in a different area.

Time

As of now we do not have scheduled times to work in the field. If in the future, we could build a volunteer based program we may stick to a time. As of now we do not need volunteers, due to the lack of volunteer work needed. On a normal basis we go to the creek every week or so and observe turtles from anywhere to 30 minutes to three hours. If we were going to have volunteer work involved, we would probably work an hour each month with volunteers. However, this is not set and may change in the future.

Work

The work we do is very fun. It often includes trudging through the mud and sand of the creek looking for turtles. This is partially why we want volunteers to be able to help with this. The workload includes taking notes on the animals we observe and analyzing the data. When we are not walking through the swampish creek we are on the move looking for turtle nesting grounds, turtles basking, and any other signs of turtles in the area. We don't always see turtles, but it is quite common to see at least two sitting on a log or on a sand bank basking.

Volunteers

As this project grows and broadens we plan to add volunteering. Volunteering could be anywhere from managing data to devoting two hours of your day finding and capturing turtles in the creek. As of now we do not have the option of volunteering, due to the fact that this project is still getting set up. We do not have an estimate as to when we may open this project up too public, but we want to do so as soon as possible.

Project goals

Throughout this project our goal is to remove a sufficient amount of red eared sliders as to slow down or all around stop the breeding and producing of this turtle in the Aliso Creek. This goal will not be easy to achieve, as there are a number of turtles in the creek, but it is certainly doable. We project this project to span at least a few years, both because it will take much time to gather data on the creeks turtle populations and because it will take time to remove a large number of turtles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope that this project can achieve its goal and that we can grow as an organization. We also hope that in the future we can open this project up to public for volunteer and educational purposes.

Aliso Creek Turtle Rescue