

LOCATION

Zoo de Lyon, Mairie de Lyon,
Zoological Garden, 69205 Lyon
cedex 01, France
Phone: +33-0472-823641
URL: <http://www.zoo.lyon.fr>

KEY WORDS

invasive, rescue, terrapin

DESCRIPTION

The Recovery Centre for North American terrapins in the Parc de la Tête d'Or at Lyon Zoo was created as one "nature project" within the zoo's conservation efforts. It was the redesign of an existing enclosure to house abandoned exotic terrapins that would otherwise be released into nature and is one of several such centres in the country.

Sliders are commonly kept as pets in France and other European countries. Sold as young animals of just a few centimeters in size, they often become too big for their owners to be kept appropriately. This is why many terrapins are released into natural ponds and lakes where they have become a serious threat to native species, in particular to the European pond turtle.

To prevent this practice, Lyon Zoo offers a large pond where anyone can rehome terrapins after filling a certificate of abandonment. Here, the animals can live in appropriate conditions and serve as educational ambassadors to clarify that turtles are not suitable to be kept as pets in small basins. The pond has a capacity for up to 3000 terrapins.

SIZE

The enclosure is 10 to 20 meters wide and about 200 meters long.



Yellow-bellied slider. ©Jonas Livet, 2015



View along the exhibit: The visitor and animal barrier is a stone wall. ©Jonas Livet, 2008

Half of the total size is the water surface of the pond.

COSTS

The enclosure existed before and was adapted for the terrapins.

ANIMALS

Family	Species	Common Name	Capacity
Emydidae	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>	Painted turtle	
Emydidae	<i>Graptemys</i> sp.	Map turtle	
Emydidae	<i>Pseudemys</i> sp.	Cooter	
Emydidae	<i>Trachemys</i> sp.	Slider	3000



Overview: The Recovery Centre for North American Terrapins is marked in pink. ©Lyon Zoo, 2016

Space allocation in square meters:

use	indoors		outdoors		total exhibit
	accessible	total	accessible	total	
animals					2,700
visitors					
others					
total					2,700

OPENING DATE
2006

DESIGN
Beginning: 2006

CONSTRUCTION
Beginning: 2006



Education panels: Along the waterfront, six signs are placed in the water and form an educational trail on red-eared sliders. ©Jonas Livet, 2008



Sign 'Research': Research carried out on the impact of Red-eared sliders in France is described here. ©Jonas Livet, 2008

PLANTS

Numerous trees and shrubs are planted along the back of the enclosure, including several weeping willows at the waterfront. Grasses and herbs grow along the sandy land areas.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS

The large water basin offers different depths and also shallow water to the turtles. Trunks and large branches are placed in the water as places for sunbathing. The concrete edge of the basin is also used as natural heater. A sandy land area allows the animals to bury their eggs, but this is not the desired aim.



Sunbathing ©Lyon Zoo, 2016



Path to the exhibit: The turtle exhibit is freely accessible to every visitor in the Parc de la Tête d'Or. ©Jonas Livet, 2008

Since the basin is 1m to 1.4m deep with 50cm of mud the turtles can hibernate like they would do in the wild.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS

The keepers get into the exhibit through a metal door in the stone wall and cross the basin via a shallow water area with concrete ground.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS

The area in the park is freely accessible to the public, so not only visitors to the zoo have the opportunity to observe the terrapins. The visitor barrier is a low natural stone wall which allows children to see the animals.

INTERPRETATION

Large panels inform the visitors about the turtles' biology, their natural habitat and their lifestyle. The red-eared-slider's problematic role in the pet trade is discussed as well as the problem of abandoning this species in non-native areas and the threats that it brings to other animals. The signage also presents the concept of recovery centers and invasive animals in general. Short slogans to each topic should draw visitors' attention to the difficulties that the actual treatment of red-eared sliders provoke and show



Integration into park. ©Jonas Livet, 2008



Sign 'Turtle biology': This sign presents the turtles' lifestyle and their natural habitat in Florida. ©Jonas Livet, 2008

alternatives to uncontrolled releases into the environment.

MANAGEMENT

To prevent the turtles from reproducing, the eggs are regularly collected by the keepers. A small area is separated by a wire netting from the large pond for animals that are possibly released anonymously.

CONSERVATION

The opportunity of giving turtles to the recovery center reduces the number of abandoned animals in the wild and thereby protects native species in the region.



Turtle beach. ©Lyon Zoo, 2016