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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Florida Red-bellied Cooter

Pseudemys nelsoni

Pseudemys nelsoni is a large, diurnal freshwater turtle from quiet lakes, ponds and marshes with dense plant growth in Florida and the extreme south-east of Georgia. The carapace is high and dark with red stripes, and the plastron is yellow-orange to reddish. Females can reach 38 cm carapace length, and adults are herbivores. An adult needs a very large, filtered tank, a warm basking spot and strong UVB.

Family: Emydidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**20-38 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**20-33 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Wetland**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**200 × 100 × 70 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**21-31 °C**
Basking spot	**30-40 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 30-45 cm
Water temperature	**21-31 °C**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects, complete diet, plants and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**36-96 months**
Clutch size	**7-26 eggs**
Clutches per year	**3-6**
Incubation	**45-80 days** at 25-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Keep the animal in a large aquarium, a tank or an enclosed indoor pond, not in an ordinary terrarium.
TEMPERATURE	For *Pseudemys nelsoni* the surface of the basking spot should be about 40 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer a couple of hours after the lamps are switched on, and the air above it 30-32 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	*Pseudemys nelsoni* lives in the water, so air humidity is not decisive; 50-80 % in the room is suitable. What matters is the cleanliness of the water.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	*Pseudemys nelsoni* lives in the water, so it must be deep, clean and warm. The water must be at least twice as deep as the carapace is wide, and 30-45 cm suits adults. The temperature is 21-31 °C for adults (see Temperature).
LIGHTING AND UVB	UVB is a necessity. *Pseudemys nelsoni* is diurnal, basks a great deal and belongs to Ferguson zone 3.
FEEDING	*Pseudemys nelsoni* is a distinctly herbivorous species.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*P. nelsoni* is diurnal and basks in large groups. It is shy and slides from the basking spot into the water at the slightest disturbance, but gets used to fixed routines.
NATIVE RANGE	United States.