

# Foreign snails, turtles found in watershed

WINCHESTER — After recently discovering non-native snail and turtle species in its watershed, South Nation Conservation has issued this timely reminder: Don't throw stuff in the river. The river in this case is the South Nation. "Stuff" includes everything from old tires to dead cows to live invasive species.

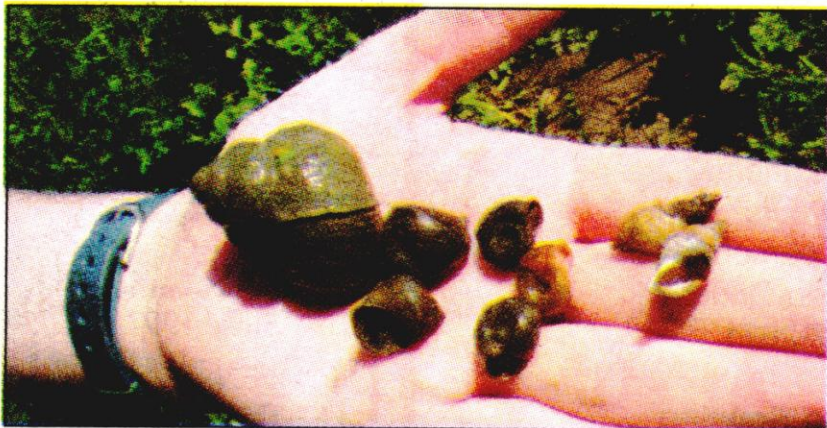
Of particular concern are live creatures dumped by owners no longer prepared to care for them which can carry diseases to native species while competing for food and habitat.

Recently discovered by SNC field staff were Chinese mystery snails in Winchester drains and a red-eared slider turtle in the Payne River near Finch.

Also called rice snails and Asian apple snails, the more commonly known mystery snails grow very large and can be present in high densities, clogging water pipes and inhibiting flow. They compete with native snails for food and space. The infected area stretches from the Gypsy Road culvert south of Winchester to the culvert on County Road 3 north of the village; the highest snail density is within the village itself.

"The most likely explanation is that someone dumped unwanted aquarium pets into the drain, a practice we definitely want to discourage," said SNC staffer Janet Greenhorn, adding that the invasive snails are now being removed manually in an attempt to slow their spread.

As for the red-eared slider found in the Payne, staff member Karen Paquette said it weighed eight pounds and was 23.5 cm in length. The species isn't native to Canada, originating from West Virginia to New Mexico and south to the Gulf of Mexico. With a distinctive reddish patch behind each eye, sliders are sold in pet stores as babies.



Chinese mystery snails from the Henderson drain.