

## Turtle Diary

By Russ Case

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Red-eared sliders love to bask. This is just one of Helmut's many basking poses. Sliders are known as basking turtles, and they love to bask in both the wild and captivity.

In my very first blog I introduced Helmut, the official REPTILES magazine and ReptileChannel red-eared slider. A fellow editor found him one day in her backyard, about two years ago, and she brought him to the office. He's been here ever since.

I thought journaling a typical day in his life might be interesting for a change, from the time I arrived in the office to the time I left. So I did this on Tuesday. The following is a detailed account of what really, truly occurred in Helmut's enclosure that day.

9:00-9:15: Frantically swam at front of aquarium, begging to be fed.  
9:15-9:20: Greedily devoured mealworms from Zoo Med Can o' Worms.  
9:20-9:25: Greedily devoured pellets of Monster Aquatic Turtle Diet.  
9:25-9:30: Greedily devoured pellets of Zoo Med Natural Aquatic Turtle Food.  
9:30-10:00: Patrolled bottom of aquarium, scavenging for additional morsels that may have been missed during initial feeding frenzy.  
10:00-11:00: Alternately swam and slept underwater.  
11:00-11:00:03: Emerged from water, heaved up onto Zoo Med Turtle Dock.  
11:00:03-12:05: Basked while alternately sleeping and observing general vicinity. (Note: both a 100-watt heat lamp and full-spectrum light are on top of Helmut's aquarium.)  
12:05-12:40: Russ out to lunch. Helmut activities during this time unknown.  
12:40-12:55: Basked. Head tucked in, front legs in, rear legs stretched out to maximum length.  
12:55-12:56: Basked. Head out.  
12:56-12:57: Basked. Head back in.  
12:57-2:20: Basked. Deep sleep with head back out, left rear leg in, right rear leg outstretched.  
2:20-2:22: Basked. Head in.  
2:22-2:34: Basked. Both rear legs stretched out, head out.  
2:34-2:40: Basked. Head out, left rear leg out, right rear leg in, left front leg out.  
2:40-3:00: Basked. Same position, but with right rear leg in.  
3:00-3:40: Basked. Everything in.  
3:40-3:49: Basked. Right front leg and left rear leg out, head partially out.  
3:49-4:15: Basked. All limbs in, head out.  
4:15-4:44: Basked. Front legs out, rear legs in, head out.  
4:44-4:52: Basked. Left rear leg stretched out, front right leg out, left front leg out and partially raised, head in.  
4:52-5:08: Basked. Head out and looking around, left rear leg out, other legs in.  
5:08: Russ leaves for the day.

I tried to be as detailed as possible. One thing I started to record but gave up was the opening and closing of Helmut's eyes. No sooner would I type "eyes open" that they would close, and vice versa. So I gave up on that idea pretty quick. I can say his eyes were closed for probably at least 70 percent of the recorded time.

You may also notice that Helmut's right front leg is somewhat underrepresented. This is because I could not see it from my desk at all times. I could see it when it was out and stretched forward slightly. If I saw it, I recorded it. If it's not mentioned, assume it was inside his shell.

Of course there were moments I had to leave my office. I checked his position prior to leaving and upon my return, and I don't believe any major activity took place that is not recorded here. I don't think he did anything as momentous as – for instance – drop into the water while I was out of the office. I was only gone for short periods, and I would have known he was in the water because his shell would have been wet when I got back. Unless he went for a quick dip and dried off while I was at lunch, I don't think he was in the water at all during the afternoon.

As you can see, sliders aren't known as "basking turtles" for nothing. Helmut's day may seem uneventful, but I will say that it typically involves another round of swimming, begging and eating, usually between 5:30 and 6. But because I leave the office a little earlier on Tuesdays to go to my Weight Watchers meeting, this later-in-the-day flurry of activity is not represented here. He'll often swim during the day, too, but not this day.

So there you have it. This was Helmut's Tuesday, May 12, 2009. Take this knowledge with you as you go forth unto the world, and do with it what you will. Me, I will never again keep a Helmut journal. It's pretty darn boring.

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