

WILDLIFE ALERT NEWSLETTER 2016



Issue 3 | 1st Quarter

GOPHER TORTOISE FAST FACTS:

Gopher tortoise burrows average seven feet deep and 15 feet long but may be more than 40 feet long.

Burrow openings are half-moon shaped with the curve at the top. Burrows with round openings have generally been taken over by an armadillo.

Adult tortoises are generally 9-11 inches long and weigh 7-9 pounds.

Females begin to reproduce when they are 9-21 years old.

They breed March-October with one clutch laid per year containing an average of six eggs.

The biggest threat to the gopher tortoises' long-term survival is loss of habitat.



Home Sweet Home. Gopher Tortoise burrows are protected by law, contact Wildlife Alert with any suspected violations.

FLORIDA GOPHER TORTOISES

In 2007, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, listed the gopher tortoise as a threatened species. Wildlife experts call the gopher tortoise a “keystone species” because it is the backbone of the plant and wildlife community in which it lives. Over 350 species of wild animals depend on gopher tortoise burrows for refuge or they take over abandoned burrows as their own. These commensal species include the indigo snake, pine snake, gopher frog, opossum, burrowing owl, Florida mouse, gopher cricket, and scarab beetle.

Become a citizen scientist by helping FWC document where the gopher tortoises live. Download the Florida Gopher Tortoise Smartphone app and join in conserving and protecting this threatened native Florida species! <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/gopher-tortoise/app/>

Frequently Asked Questions and Facts

Q: What should I do if I see a gopher tortoise crossing the road?

A: Move the tortoise across the road in the direction it was heading. Do not take the tortoise with you in your vehicle, it is illegal. Also, gopher tortoises are terrestrial, so please do not put them in the water.

Q: What do I do if I find a sick or injured gopher tortoise?

A: Sometimes it's better to leave a sick tortoise alone to return to its burrow to heal. If treatment is necessary call your regional FWC office to find a wildlife rehabilitator in the area. If you believe the injury is a result of a violation and you can provide information, call or text Wildlife Alert.

“Remember, it only takes a short phone call or a brief text message to make a big difference.”

– Wildlife Alert

WEBSITES TO VISIT FOR MORE INFORMATION

- <http://myfwc.com/education/wildlife/gopher-tortoise/>
- <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/gopher-tortoise/help/>
- <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/gopher-tortoise/rules-and-regulations/>

4TH QUARTER STATS

The Wildlife Alert hotline received over **300** violation report calls, emails, and texts. We paid out more than **\$7,800** in rewards for the tips that ended in arrest. Keep those tips coming!

Thank you to the citizens who are helping conserve Florida's wildlife and natural resources!

Case of the Quarter:

The Northeast Region received a Wildlife Alert report of a violation involving the destruction of possible gopher tortoise burrows by property development/land clearing and the death of a gopher tortoise. The individual charged in this incident did not obtain the proper permits from FWC for authorization to relocate the gopher tortoises on the property.

The anonymous citizen that reported this crime received a \$350 reward!



Contact Us

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ILLEGAL CAPTURING OF MIGRATORY SONGBIRDS

Wild, non-native painted and indigo buntings breed in northern Florida, spend the winter primarily in southern Florida, and can be found throughout much of the state during spring and fall migration. Poachers illegally trap these beautiful birds to sell them, often to the unsuspecting members of the public. The traps used to capture these colorful birds are elaborate, large devices that can be found hanging from trees two to four feet above the ground in high grasses.

These actions are illegal and violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which was established in 1918 to protect migratory birds.

