

## GOPHER TORTOISES

Common Name: gopher tortoise

Other Names: gopher

Scientific Name: Gopherus polyphemus

Appearance:

size	- upper shell (carapace) up to 14 inches long
weight	- up to 15 pounds
color	- from light tan to dark gray

Range: - statewide

Habitat: - sandy, well-drained upland areas

Diet: - grasses, herbaceous plants, insects, and carrion

Reproduction: - 4-7 eggs are laid in nest dug near burrow entrance  
- young hatch out late summer to early fall

Behavior:

- average burrow is 15 feet long and 6 feet deep
- life span can be over 50 years
- home range: 2.4 acres for males, 0.5 acres for females
- communicate with one another by head bobbing

Problems: - dig burrows in yards and garden areas

Solutions:

- learn more about gopher tortoises, this species of special concern suffers from loss of habitat and its presence should be encouraged and valued
- if problems with gopher tortoises can not be tolerated, contact your regional Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission office.

Legal Aspects:

- as a species of special concern, it is illegal to take, possess, transport, or sell gopher tortoises or their eggs except as authorized by the Commission
- a person who is convicted of violating laws related to the protection of this species is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree which is punishable by a fine up to \$500 and/or 60 days in jail.
- permits from the Commission are required to relocate tortoises
- because of the potential for spreading diseases to other tortoises, relocation is discouraged