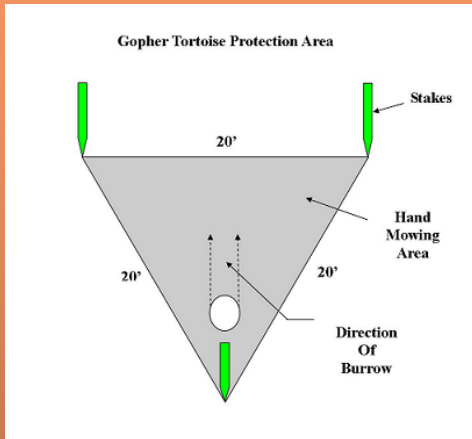


BONITA SPRINGS IS A GOPHER
TORTOISE SAFE PLACE

Tortoise Burrow
Staking Guidelines



1. Post one gopher tortoise stake 5 feet in front of the burrow.
2. Determine the direction of the burrow and post two more stakes in a triangle to attempt to encompass the burrow, per the diagram below.



Use of heavy machinery inside the gopher tortoise triangle protection area may collapse the gopher tortoise burrow. The City of Bonita Springs recommends that this area be hand mowed. If a burrow collapses by accident, no action is needed, gopher tortoises can burrow out of a collapsed burrow but may take up to 45 days to do so. If you believe the collapsed burrow is not an accident please call the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Law Enforcement at, 1-888-404-3922 and report the incident.

Think Globally Act Locally
Do Your Part to Help Bonita
Springs Protect the
Threatened Gopher Tortoise

For more information
contact:

City of Bonita Springs
Environmental Specialist
Phone (239) 444-6142

or

Florida Fish & Wildlife at
FloridaConservation.org



GOPHER TORTOISES

BALANCING THEIR
RIGHT TO SURVIVE AND
THE RIGHTS OF
PROPERTY OWNERS



THE CITY OF BONITA SPRINGS HAS
DEEMED ITSELF A GOPHER TORTOISE
SAFEPLACE AND ENCOURAGES
EVERYONE TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS IN
ORDER TO SAVE THIS SPECIES AND ITS
HABITAT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

CITY OF BONITA SPRINGS

BONITA SPRINGS AFFIRMS THE WORTH



With its high, dry habitat rapidly disappearing there is a need for management plans and educational tools.:

- 1. You do not need to capture and relocate tortoises if you can avoid burrow entrances by 25 feet.**
- 2. A permit is always required to possess, study, or relocate gopher tortoises.**
- 3. The application for authorized gopher tortoise agents was revised requiring training courses to be offered by private entities by Spring of 2009.**

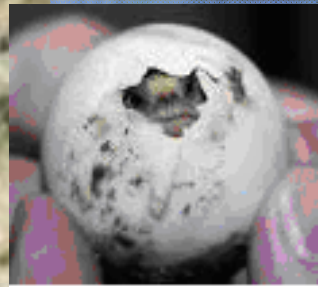
Gopher tortoises can live 50 years or more. They take a long time to mature -- females reach adulthood at 10 to 20 years of age, depending on latitude. Although adult tortoises average 9-11 inches in length, the record shell length is 15 inches.

A FULL HOUSE

Hatchling gopher tortoises may use an adult burrow or dig a small burrow of their own. Young gopher tortoises are vulnerable to predation until their shell hardens at about 6-7 years of age. Raccoon, indigo snake, black bear, and red-tailed hawk, among others, eat hatchlings and young tortoises. Adult tortoises have few enemies other than humans, although domestic dogs and raccoons are known to eat them.

APRIL THRU OCTOBER IS THE ACTIVE SEASON

Gopher tortoises generally do not lay their eggs inside the burrow, but often lay eggs inside the "apron" or sand mound in front of the burrow (females will also lay eggs in sunlit areas away from the burrow). The white eggs are approximately the same size and shape as ping-pong balls. Tortoise eggs are hard unlike the soft eggs of snakes and lizards. Active nests can be found as early as April and as late as October. Eggs are usually laid from mid-May through mid-June.



IS ANYBODY HOME?

Tortoise tracks or droppings likely signal a burrow is occupied. However, any burrow with a clear opening could potentially be occupied. After heavy rains, burrows may appear eroded, but could still be occupied. An average rainstorm can cause recent tracks at the mouth of the burrow to disappear. Even burrows with spider webs, dead leaves, or other vegetation around the mouth or apron could be occupied. Juvenile tortoises will sometimes use old adult burrows. Adults can stay in burrows for extended periods, especially during the colder months of the year making the burrow appear unoccupied.

