

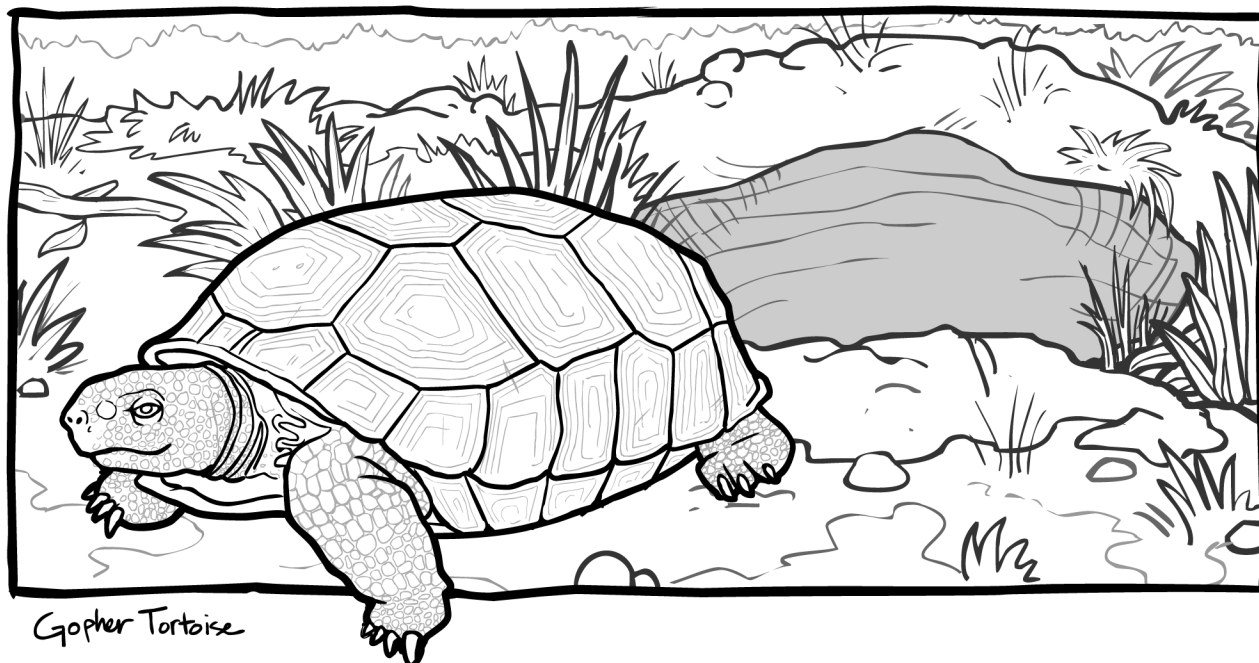
Gopher Tortoise *(Gopherus polyphemus)*

Instant ID

- Young have a yellowish shell, while adults have a dark brown to grayish shell
- Flattened front legs for digging burrows
- Adults have shells about a foot long and may live up to 60 years

Native Niches

- Found throughout Florida
- Prefers dry habitats, including prairies, oak hammocks and sandhills
- Digs burrow that can be up to 40 feet long and 10 feet deep
- Can be found in over 74 Florida State Parks



Gopher Tortoise *(Gopherus polyphemus)*

Favorite Foods

- Eats grasses and berries, but rarely drinks water
- Relies on frequent wildfire, which encourages growth in the plants it eats

Critter Characteristics

- Considered a keystone species, because more than 350 species rely on gopher tortoise burrows
- Burrows give other species protection from heat, cold, predators and fire

Population Protection

- Listed as a threatened species in Florida
- You can help by not disturbing gopher tortoise burrows