



Notes From a Co-Chair

Christian Newman

I am excited to announce that the next Annual Gopher Tortoise Meeting will be held in Gainesville, Florida on October 2-3 at the Paramount Hotel. This year's topic will be Effective Education and Outreach for Gopher Tortoises and Upland Habitat Conservation. It will be an opportunity to hear about how we can better communicate and ultimately change or influence the public's behavior to conserve gopher tortoises and their habitat. It will foster the exchange of information between researchers, managers, educators, and other outreach specialists. In addition to the traditional meeting presentations on Friday and Saturday, we are planning to offer educator workshops/trainings that weekend that support tortoise and upland conservation efforts. Friday's sessions will revolve around Effective Outreach and Education and Saturday will focus on the traditional research and management topics important to tortoises and upland conservation.

If you are interested in participating in planning efforts, can suggest contacts to reach educators, know of educator training programs that be interesting for the meeting, or have presentation ideas please email me at cmnewman@pandionsystems.com. We will be sending out a formal announcement for the meeting and request for presentation submissions soon but please spread the word.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in Gainesville in October.

Gassing Burrows Now Illegal in Alabama

Mark Sasser

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Conservation Board met recently and unanimously voted to approve the regulation prohibiting the gassing of gopher tortoise burrows. The actual regulation reads: Regulation 220-2-.11 Prohibited Methods and Devices for Hunting. It shall be unlawful to concentrate, drive, rally, molest, or to hunt, take, capture or kill or attempt to hunt, take capture or kill any bird or animal from or by the aid of (8) gasoline or any noxious chemical or gaseous substance to drive wildlife from their burrows, dens, or retreats".

By this, (8), being added to the Prohibited Methods and Devices for Hunting, this allows the arrest of anyone for not only in the act of "gassing", but "attempting to take". "Attempting to take" means possessing the equipment in the woods, such as a hose, gas, and snake catching equipment (bag, hook, etc). They do not have to be caught in the act to be illegal, which really makes this a strong regulation and much easier to enforce.

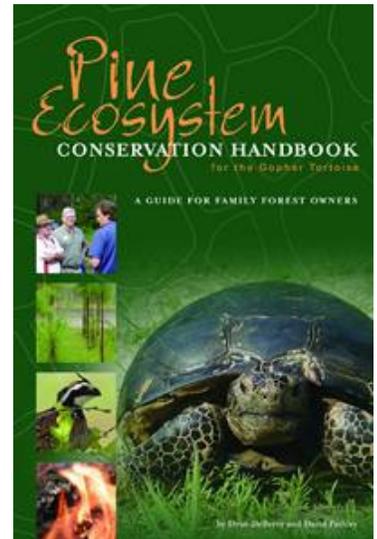
The support for the adoption of this regulation from Jim Godwin and Craig Guyer from Auburn University and the Alabama Wildlife Federation and their willingness to contact the Conservation Advisory Board was important to passing of this much needed regulation.

Tortoise-friendly Forest Management Handbooks Available

The Center for Conservation Solutions has produced a series of forest management recommendations that consider the needs of gopher tortoises and other non-game species. The handbooks are aimed at family forest owners and includes information on prescribed burns, invasive species, and conservation incentives. Handbooks are customized for several states within the range of the gopher tortoise. Several GTC members were contributing authors.

For more information:

http://conservationforestry.org/Publications/publications_Handbooks.cfm



A Call for Caretakers and Landowners

Joan Berish

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is in need of ‘more than a few’ good men and women to provide homes for those “waif” gopher tortoises that are non-releasable (e.g., long-term captives whose owners can no longer keep them; disabled individuals, generally due to trauma from vehicles or canines; tortoises taken out-of-state and returned with no locality data, etc.). Please note that possessing a gopher tortoise in Florida requires a no-cost permit, and that this commitment can be a long-term relationship because tortoises may live 40+ years. If you are interested and think you have the “right stuff” to be a tortoise caretaker, you can download a permit application from FWC’s website (on the application, make sure to check the box marked “Wildlife Possession”, and indicate that the application is to keep a non-releasable gopher tortoise in captivity, rather than to conduct research or educational activities):

http://www.myfwc.com/License/Permits_ProtectedWildlife.htm#scientific

At the other end of the spectrum, FWC is also seeking landowners (i.e., those with >40 acres of gopher tortoise habitat) who might be interested having their land become a recipient site for tortoises displaced by development. Obviously, this is a much larger commitment than caring for a captive tortoise. There is a small cost associated with obtaining this permit, but there is also the opportunity to generate revenue for habitat management by receiving displaced tortoises. It is imperative that such certified recipient sites have suitable tortoise habitat (e.g., appropriately drained soils and adequate forage), have room for additional tortoises, and can be managed successfully far into the future (e.g., using prescribed fire on a regular basis). If you are interested, please see FWC’s gopher tortoise website and click on “News and updates” for details:

<http://MyFWC.com/GopherTortoise>

GTC Student Research Grant Program

Bob Herrington

The J. Larry Landers Student Research Award is a Gopher Tortoise Council competitive grant program for undergraduate and graduate college students. Proposals can address research concerning gopher tortoise biology or any other relevant aspect of upland habitat conservation and management. The amount of the award is variable, but has averaged \$1,000.00 over the last few years.

The proposal should be limited to four pages in length and should include a description of the project, a concise budget, and a brief resume of the student. This is an excellent opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to access funding for their projects.

The deadline for grant proposals each year is the 15th of September.

Please send submissions to:

[Bob Herrington Ph.D.](#)

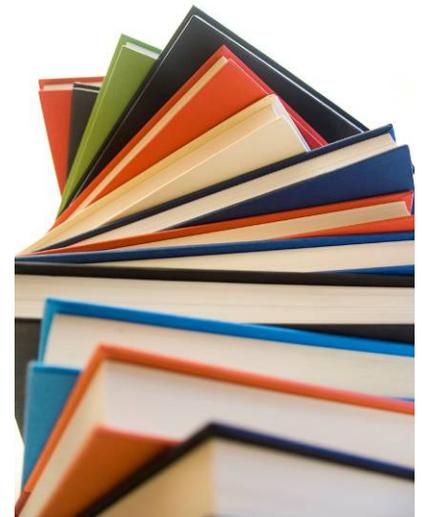
Professor

Department of Biology

Georgia Southwestern State University

Americus, GA, 31709

229-931-2331



Recent Research

GTC Members in Bold

Sandmeier, F. C., C. R. Tracy, S. duPre, and K. Hunter. In press. Upper respiratory tract disease (URTD) as a threat to desert tortoise populations: a reevaluation. *Biological Conservation*.

Roznik, E. A., and **S. A. Johnson**. 2009. Canopy closure and emigration by juvenile gopher frogs. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 73:260-268.

Kinlaw, A. E., L. B. Conyers, and W. Zajac. 2007. Use of ground penetration radar to image burrows of the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). *Herpetological Review* 38:50-56.



A profusion of fall wildflowers and wiregrass bloom following a growing season burn in southwest Georgia.

Photo submitted by Matt Greene

© 2008 Matt Greene

Newsletter of The Gopher Tortoise Council

Directory of 2009 Gopher Tortoise Council Officers,
Committee Chairs, and State Representatives
Please view the GTC website (below) for contact information

Co-chairs

Terry Norton
Christian Newman

Secretary

Ron Concoby

Membership Secretary

Will Knox

Treasurer

Don Stillwaugh

Newsletter Editor

David Steen

Website Manager

Jess Gonyor

GTC Representative to PARC

John Jensen

Standing Committee Chairs

Nominating Committee

Joan Berish

Public Information and Education Committee

Laura Wewerka

Upland Snake Conservation Committee

Jeff Holmes
David Steen

Research Advisory Committee

Bob Herrington

State Representatives

Alabama

Mark Bailey

Florida

Joan Berish

Georgia

Sean Graham

Louisiana

Beau Gregory

Mississippi

Tom Mann

South Carolina

Steve Bennett

Tracey Tuberville

The Tortoise Burrow

<http://www.gophertortoisecouncil.org>

The Tortoise Burrow is published in December, April and August. Deadlines for submission of announcements and articles are the 15th of the preceding month. Send materials to the editor:

David Steen
DavidASteen@gmail.com

Decisions concerning publication of submitted material rest with the editor and co-chairs.

Reprint Policy: Articles, photographs or opinions that appear in *The Tortoise Burrow* may be reprinted with the written consent of the editor and GTC Co-chairs.

The GTC reserves the right to approve editorial changes prior to reprinting and requests that reprints credit *The Tortoise Burrow, Newsletter of the Gopher Tortoise Council*.

© Gopher Tortoise Council 2009

