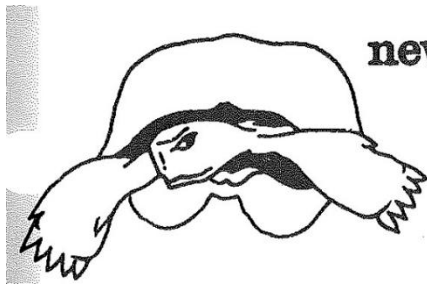




This is a reproduction of a previous Gopher Tortoise Council newsletter. This document has been altered from its original presentation so that information, news, and notable content can be preserved. Formatting, spelling, and grammar have been maintained to the extent possible. If possible, original images from the document have been included in these reproductions. The current and recent newsletters of the Gopher Tortoise Council, *The Tortoise Burrow*, can be found on the Council's website [here](#). Personal information, such as addresses and phone numbers have been redacted from this document.



newsletter of the GOPHER TORTOISE COUNCIL

Image: Original artwork and letterhead for the newsletter of the Gopher Tortoise Council

The NEWSLETTER is intended to inform members of the recent Council activities, scientific and conservation related research, and others news concerning the gopher tortoise, *Gopherus polyphemus*. News items and other contributions are welcomed. Please send these contributions to the Newsletter editor, Roger Weill, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, ### #. ##### St., Jackson, MS 39202.

Executive Committee: Bette Bechtel and Nora Dietlein (co-chairpersons), Lesley Hunt (treasurer), Richard Franz (secretary). State representatives: Dan Speake (Alabama), Paul Moler (Florida), Ron Odum (Georgia), Bob Thomas (Louisiana), Ron Altig (Mississippi), and John Cely (South Carolina)

Public Relations and Education Committee: Howard Lawler (chairperson), Clarence Abercrombie III, Tony Jensen, Mike Thomas, and Harold Wahlquist.

Research Advisory Committee: Walter Auffenberg (chairperson), Howard Campbell, Archie Carr, James Dobie, Julian Harrison, Edmund Keiser, Jim Layne, Larry Landry, Richard Montinucci, Robert Mount, Peter Pritchard, and Dan Speake.

GENERAL NOTES:

Rattlesnake Roundup in Evans County, Georgia -- The Evans County Wildlife Club sponsored its 12th Annual Rattlesnake Roundup on 10 March 1979, formally endorsing the protection of the gopher tortoise. They presented a status review and short description of the gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake, and pine snake and gopher frog. Their program on the eastern diamondback rattlesnake was a first class informative and objective presentation. We commend the members of the Evans Wildlife Club for helping the gopher tortoise and its associated species and urge other groups to follow suite. Leslie Hunt

GOPHER TORTOISE RACE AT RIDGELAND, JASPER COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA --

Like many communities in the state, Ridgeland for several years has promoted a festival using local history and points of interest as selling points. Since the gopher tortoise has been closely associated with the area (Ridgeland was formerly known as Gopher Hill until the late 1800's when the city fathers opted for a more "dignified" name), it was only natural for the town to initiate a tortoise race. In fact, the festival became known as Gopher Hill Day. However this race violated the 1974 S. C. Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act which prohibited the taking of any state endangered species. Maximum fines are set at \$1,000. Thanks to the efforts of Ken Stansell, former supervisor of the state's endangered species program, and Jack Kridler, amateur herpetologist from Ridgeland, city fathers were persuaded from using tortoises last year and substituted box turtles instead. Credit should also be given to the people of Ridgeland for their understanding and cooperation in this matter. Many of the local folk seem to have an appreciation for the tortoise and take pride in protecting it. Many run people off their property for collecting gophers.

Although the gopher race was in clear violation of state law and was rightfully terminated, the biggest problem gophers face in South Carolina is habitat destruction and in some cases, illegal collecting. Because tortoises occupy such a small area in the state and are all located on private property, they are vulnerable. John E. Cely

NOTE: John Cely replaces Ken Stansell as state representative, Gopher Tortoise Council.

MEETING: The first open meeting of the Gopher Tortoise Council will be held at the Florida State Museum this fall. Pertinent information concerning this meeting will appear in the next issue of the newsletter (R. Franz)

RECENT LITERATURE

We hope to reference literature (not listed in either of the John F. Douglass' bibliographies) as it becomes available. The word ABSTRACT indicates that the included summarizing paragraphs before an account is the actual abstract as it appeared in the paper.

Douglass, J. F. 1977. Abnormalities of scutellation in a population of Gopherus polyphemus (Reptiles, Testudinidae). Florida Scientist. 40 (3) : 256-258.

Nineteen (14.6%) of 130 gopher tortoises examined had divided, extra, or missing scutes on the carapace. A relatively high frequency of abnormalities in small animals suggests a higher mortality of abnormally scutelated individuals in the population studied. (Verbatim Abstract)

Douglass, J. F. 1978. Refugia of juvenile gopher tortoises, Gopherus polyphemus (Reptilia, Testudines, Testudinidae). Journal of Herpetology 12 (3) : 413-415.

Hatchlings either enter burrows of adults or bury under sand or litter during their first winter; they first construct burrows of their own upon emergence in the spring. (Summary by RF)

Thomas, M. 1978. Gopher Tortoise. The Florida Naturalist. 51 (3) : 2-4.

This popular article describes the plight of the gopher tortoise in Florida. Numerous photographs include the tortoise in its burrow and a series showing the butchering of this animal for food.

CORRECTION: Unfortunately, we misspelled Larry Lander's name in the last Newsletter. Please forgive our trespasses, Larry.

NOTE: Due to other commitments Mike Frazier is resigning from the Newsletter. We owe him a vote of thanks for his efforts in getting issues out. Roger

This document was created and transcribed by Bradley O'Hanlon
December 2025