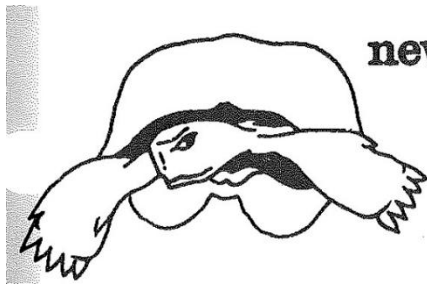




This is a reproduction of a previous Gopher Tortoise Council newsletter. This document has been altered from its original presentation so that information, news, and notable content can be preserved. Formatting, spelling, and grammar have been maintained to the extent possible. If possible, original 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

SANIBEL ISLAND: A MODEL FOR LOCAL TORTOISE PROTECTION

It began with the rescue of the survivors of a tortoise race and culminated with the passage of a tortoise protection ordinance. The actions of citizens, city council members, and developers on Sanibel Island in Lee County, Florida, show what can be done when people are informed of the problems faced by local fauna.

1978 was the fiftieth year of the gopher tortoise race held in conjunction with Fort Myers' Pageant of Lights. It was also the last year for the race, thanks to Adamm Smith, a Sanibel naturalist, and Nora Deitlein, former co-chairperson of the Council and currently environmental consultant to the development firm of Captran, Inc. They managed to bring to Sanibel the 108 tortoises still alive of the 150 captured for the race, treated their wounds, scraped off the paint and glue which held on their racing decorations, and found suitable habitat for them on the island and elsewhere. Their actions and the publicity they generated resulted in permanent cancellation of the traditional race.

Interest in Sanibel reached such a pitch that the city council enacted an ordinance prohibiting harassment of gopher tortoises and destruction of burrows, backed up by a \$500 fine or 60 days in jail.

Smith and Deitlein have found a method of working with developers which has saved many tortoises and stimulated even more local interest. They survey land slated for development and advise the builder of the presence of gopher burrows and of protective measures that can be taken during construction. Usually this involves simply fencing off the burrows, but a few builders -- Captran, for one -- have completely reworked their site plans to accommodate the tortoises. Occasionally a tortoise is relocated. Many island residents have offered their yards to displaced gophers and are keenly interested in their welfare.

Smith is currently tending twenty tortoises which the General Acceptance Corporation (GAC) removed from a subdivision site. GAC financed the construction of a pen in Smith's back yard, as well as the care and feeding of the group until next spring, when Smith will find a suitable area for them near their original home. The tortoises so far have produced thirty eggs.

NEW FLORIDA RULES

The Florida Fresh Water Fish and Game Commission has issued its hunting regulations for 1979-80. Although all turtles not classified as threatened or endangered are fair game, no gophers may be taken from April 1 through June 30. Use of firearms is not allowed, but barbless hooks are permitted. The limit on possession is still five tortoises. Sale and purchase are forbidden.

GOING PRICES FOR GOPHERS

Ren Lohofener of Mississippi State University reports that locals are paying \$2 to \$3 per tortoise. In Florida they bring up to \$15, according to a June 1978 Florida Naturalist article by Mike Thomas.

COUNCIL HAS NEW MISSISSIPPI STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. John Burris, Mississippi Heritage Program, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, temporarily replaces Dr. Ron Altig, who is currently on leave from his teaching duties at Mississippi State University.

INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY SPONSORS TORTOISE RESEARCH IN GEORGIA

The International Paper Company is conducting a long-term research project on gopher tortoises at their Southlands Experiment Forest in Bainbridge, Georgia. Directed by J. Larry Landers (a member of the Council's Research Advisory Committee), the project recently presented its annual report to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Projects include a distribution survey in Georgia, home range determination by radio telemetry and by attaching spools of thread to tortoises, research into the effects of forest management on tortoises, and studies of food habits, nutrition, and reproduction. Accomplishments to date include the perfection of a sexing technique using body measurements, correlation between size of female and clutch size, and soil characterization of areas supporting large colonies. With the data they are collecting on plastral growth rings and recapture records, they are attempting to determine annual growth rates. Landers is assisted by James Buckner, James Garner, and Alan McRae.

If you have any information about Georgia gopher tortoises, Landers would greatly appreciate hearing from you. His address is International Paper Co., Bainbridge, Georgia 31717 (phone ###-###-####).

****DON'T FORGET**JOINT GOPHER TORTOISE COUNCIL/ALL FLORIDA
HERPETOLOGY CONFERENCE*******

Saturday, 10 November in Gainesville, FL

SEND US YOUR NEWS! Research reports, protection efforts, population status information, legal developments, recent publications (copies appreciated, but citations are welcome).. anything which you think Council members should know about... send to Roger Weill at the Mississippi Museum or to Karla Heimann, ### ## ### Street, Gainesville, FL 32601.

This document was created and transcribed by Bradley O'Hanlon
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