



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.

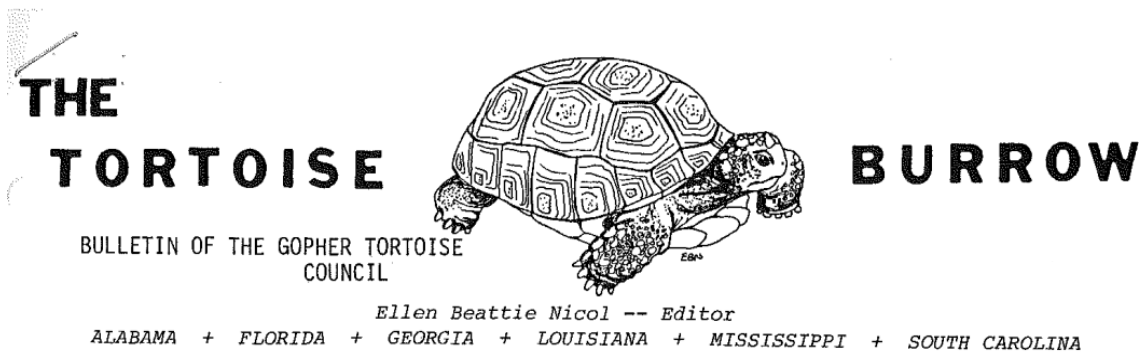


Image: Original artwork and letterhead for the newsletter of the Gopher Tortoise Council

1985 POST ANNUAL MEETING ISSUE 1985
Dixie, Alabama -Nov. 15-16-17

The meeting was called to order at 8:57 AM, November 16, 1985 at Solon Dixon Forestry Center (of Auburn University) by Co-chairman, Dr. Robert H. Mount, of Auburn University.

Dr. C. Kenneth Dodd is to be in charge of the Proceedings from this meeting, available sometime during 1986. The first speaker was Laurie Macdonald who spoke on the food habits of the gopher tortoise from her studies at U. of So. Florida. Steve Godley spoke on relocation of gopher tortoises onto reclaimed phosphate-mined land in Central Florida. Steve is with Biological Research Associates.

Student Awards were given by John Marshall, of Un. of So. Florida. Dr. D. Bruce Means, of the Coastal Plains Institute gave a summary of a 10-year study of the gopher tortoise in Northern Florida. For the U.S.F.W.S., John Pulliam of Jackson, MS. Reported on protection of populations of gopher tortoises in western Mississippi. State reports by representatives were presented.

Major Joseph Ward, PhD, of the U.S.A.F. was awarded the Gopher Tortoise Council Award for his success in getting the Air Force to close roughly 800,000 acres of gopher tortoise habitat on military bases to hunting, during 1985.

Dr. George W. Folkerts, of Auburn University, spoke on "The Home of the Gopher Tortoise". Appreciation was expressed to Ed. Webster and Mark Bailey (graduate students of Auburn Un.) for help in registration and for manning the sophisticated recording equipment, and also to Bob Mount for the arrangements to provide most pleasant and attractive facilities for the weekend meeting.

Panelists for a discussion on management strategies were: Joan Diemer, FL., Dr. George Folkerts, AL., Larry Hedrick, U.S.Forest Service, Larry Landers, FL., Dr. D. Bruce Means, FL., Dr. Henry Mushinsky, FL., and Dr. Dan Speake, AL. These discussions continued into the evening, after a break for a short business meeting, presided over by Dale Jackson.

Dr. Robert Taylor, Treas. of GTC, reported a balance of \$2,226. at that time. It was announced that Proceedings for the 1984 meeting would not be ready until early 1986 and will be mailed to members who paid their dues for 1985. Design of a new brochure issued by the GTC and called "The Gopher Tortoise: A Species in Decline" is to be undertaken in the coming year. Christine Sehleh is to be head of a Design Committee. Dr. Harold Wahlquist, Dr. Ren Lohofener and Joan Diemer are to manage a Research Advisory Committee. Dick Franz and Bette Bechtel are to comprise a Nominating Committee, and a Conservation Committee is to be headed by Dr. Dale Jackson.

Ms. Terry Osterman, of the Un. of So. Florida was elected as the new Co-chairperson, to replace Dr. Dale Jackson, whose term (of two years) has expired.

On Sunday, Nov. 17, some members took advantage of a field trip to some interesting nearby habitat, in the morning, and the meeting was officially concluded by noon.

The Gopher Tortoise Council wishes to formally thank Dr. Emmett Thompson, Dean, School of Forestry of Auburn University, for offering the use of the forestry facilities at the Solon Dixon Center, and also Mr. Everett Johnson, Resident Manager of the Center for GREAT meals and providing well-managed convenient headquarters which were conducive to what seemed to be a most productive meeting. Bob Mount also provided us with some other creature comforts that helped make the entire weekend schedule run very smoothly. Even the weather cooperated, as it could not have been more ideal.

Ellen Nicol, Secretary

A message from the Chairman of the GTC Committee on Public Information and Education:

“Dear GTC Member:

There is great concern throughout the state of Florida due to the closing of the Office of Environmental Education early this summer. The GTC at its last meeting on Nov. 16, at the Solon Dixon Forestry Center voted to support a coalition of environmental education organizations and other interested groups in whatever responsible action would be necessary to reinstate this office. The GTC has also suggested that Christine Schleh be the representative at the above-mentioned coalition meeting on Nov. 23. A Resolution, drawn up by the GTC is as follows:

WHEREAS, The Florida State Legislature has dissolved the Office of Environmental Education in the State Department of Education, and

WHEREAS, public instruction is essential for the wellbeing and health of Florida’s environment,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Gopher Tortoise Council give organizational support to the efforts of a coalition of environmental organizations to reinstitute this office or an equivalent thereof, which functions effectively to educate Florida’s youth.

This is a significant step. The GTC, through its support, is acknowledging that public education is an extremely important aspect of developing citizen interest in protection of Florida’s fragile environmental systems. We as members, all know the direct relationship this has to gopher tortoise habitat. Progress in the legislative system on this matter is expected and members will be kept informed.”

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Schleh

SSAR OPPOSES PET TURTLE INDUSTRY

Although state regulations prohibit the commercial exploitation of juvenile gopher tortoises, most species of turtles are not so protected. However, interstate shipping of young turtles (less than 4 inches was banned 10 years ago (1975) by the Food and Drug Administration in an effort to reduce the incidence of salmonellosis, a bacterial disease commonly associated with captive hatchling turtles. In response to pressures on FDA by the pet turtle industry to lift the ban, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR) unanimously endorsed at its 1985 annual meeting the following resolution to FDA Commissioner Frank Young:

WHEREAS missions of hatchling turtles produced on breeding farms in the southeastern United States are being exported to Europe, the Far East and other parts of the world for the pet trade, and

WHEREAS these turtles are an important route for transmission of salmonellosis, and

WHEREAS the trade requires the taking of an estimated 100,000 adult turtles out of the wild every year to replace breeding stock which has perished, and

WHEREAS the pet turtle industry is continuing efforts to get the existing domestic ban on the sale of hatchlings lifted, thereby opening up a market for many additional missions of hatchings, thus necessitating severe exploitation of wild populations for breeding stock,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that SSAR goes on record as opposed to the commercial exploitation of chelonians for pet industry purposes.

GOPHER TORTOISE SURVEY UNDERWAY

A result of public interest and pressure generated by the South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SCWF), the Public Service Authority of South Carolina (Santee Cooper) has started an environmental impact study of prime South Carolina gopher tortoise habitat recently purchased by the public utility for a future power plant.

The land, 1,000 acres bordering on the Savannah River in the Tillman Sand Ridge area in the southeastern corner of the state, represents 40 percent of the gopher tortoise habitat in South Carolina. In a letter to South Carolina Gov. Richard Riley, SCWF Executive Director Betty Spence asked whether the power utility company was aware of the importance of this habitat to the tortoise, a state-endangered species.

South Carolina is the northernmost edge of the gopher tortoise's habitat. There were an estimated 306 tortoises in the Tillman Sand Ridge area last year.

The tortoise burrows in dry sand ridges and hills for protection from both predators and the elements. Since the female tortoise must be 15 years old before it begins to breed and will lay only a few eggs a year, the survival of this species depends heavily on a stable adult population.

Responding to SCWF's concerns, Santee Cooper originally promised "an exhaustive analysis of . . . potential habitat impacts" in the future, but subsequent public outcries about conflicts construction of a power plant at the site would cause prompted the Authority to begin its study now. Mike Harrelson, and environmental engineer with Santee Cooper, said that the Authority wanted to develop a more complete database on gopher tortoise populations than what is currently available.

He added that Santee Cooper has retained a consulting firm which will hire specialists to conduct the studies over the next year. Results are expected by late 1986.

(From the Leader -- National Wildlife Federation, Vol. 6, No. 9, Sept. 1985)

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Over the past few years the Memphis Zoo and Aquarium in Conjunction with the Lichterman Nature Center, Memphis, TN, have been working with a technique for repairing turtle shell fractures. The use of fiberglass mat and resin enabled injured specimens to be repaired and released after a variable period of recuperation. They have repaired and rehabilitated red-eared turtles and box turtles. They would like to invite anyone with experience on interested in this topic to please correspond. Write to Donna Martin, Rehabilitation Specialist, Lichterman Nature Center, ##### Road, Memphis TN 38119, or George Heinrich, Herpetology Dept., Memphis Zoo and Aquarium, #####, Memphis, TN 38112

1985 DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM

Arrangements are being finalized for the 11th Annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium. Tentative plans call for the Symposium to be held in Palmdale, CA, March 22-24 1986. After a four-year hiatus, it was decided it was time to bring the Symposium back to California. Another factor in the choice of location for this year's Symposium was the desire to hold the Symposium close to the Desert Tortoise Natural Area to better publicize the situation there and in the western Mojave Desert where the tortoise is under a variety of assaults from numerous fronts, including ORVs, grazing, agriculture and urban development.

For additional details, write: Desert Tortoise Council, ##### Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805.

AND FROM MISSISSIPPI...

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Bureau of Fisheries and Wildlife

P.O. Box #####

Jackson, Mississippi 39205

PUBLIC NOTICE NO. 2552

The Mississippi Commission on Wildlife Conservation, and a meeting in Jackson, Mississippi on August 20, 1985, under authority of Section 25-43-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, made known its intent to adopt and thirty days thereafter did adopt the following rules and regulations pertaining to turtles and tortoises. This is being done under authority of Section 49-1-29(i), Mississippi Code of 1972.

Be it ordered that the taking, possessing, transporting, exporting, processing, selling, offering for sale, or shipping of the eggs by any species of turtle or tortoise is prohibited unless specifically authorized by a valid scientific collecting permit.

Be it further ordered that introduction of gasoline, kerosene, or any other chemical into the burrows dug by a gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), whether or not these burrows are occupied by gopher tortoises or have been abandoned, is prohibited.

This adopted public notice will become effective October 20, 1985.

Witness my hand and seal this the 20th day of September, 1985.

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

By: _____
A. G. Williams, Chairman

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

By: _____
Long Strong, Executive Director

(Ed. Note. It is my understanding that the first part of this rule pertains to map turtles (*Graptemys oculifera*) used for food by restaurants.)

THEY'LL 'FLIP' OVER FLIGHT

BRIGANTINE, N.J. (AP) -- Four sub-tropical sea turtles will be strapped into their reserved seats on a DC-9 aircraft this weekend for a get-away flight to southern Florida. The turtles, which washed up on Long Island in New York several weeks ago, have been nursed back to health by the Marine Mammal Stranding Center here and are now ready for release south of Miami, said bob Schoelkopf, the Center's director.

Most airlines would only give the turtles passage in chilly cargo holds that would not be good for the animals' health, he said.

But Florida Flights-Sterling Public Charter had a few open seats on its 1 p.m. flight today from Atlantic City International Airport in Pomona, and offered them to the turtles, said Millie Totoro, the airline's director of reservations. "They are going to travel in the cabin and they are going to

be on the seats,” she said, adding that the turtles will be in boxes and share a row with stranding center members as to not disturb other passengers.

Schoelkopf said that the turtles belong to the endangered Kemp’s Ridley species and migrate north from the Gulf of Mexico. Many die after becoming trapped in cold northern back bays during homeward migrations in the fall, and that’s probably what nearly happened to the four turtles at the stranding center, he said.

News of the turtles’ flight has generated quite a few jokes, Ms. Totoro said. “Everybody sort of visualized this turtle with sunglasses going down to Florida,” she said.

NEWS ITEM -- NEXT DAY

Fort Lauderdale (AP) Four subtropical sea turtles, survivors of a group of 10 trapped in lethally cold northern waters, arrived safe and sound inside boxes kept cozy in the cabin of a DC-9. “It’s a long trip, but they’ve got a lot of spirit. That’s why we want to save them,” said Bob Schoelkopf.

The turtles landed Sunday at Fort Lauderdale’s International Airport. “They’re having a good time. We put them in the non-smoking section,” an airline spokesman said. Officials at the marine center have nursed the 2- to 3- year-old reptiles and sent them south to enjoy a longer life in the warm waters off the Florida Keys.

(From Ocala Star-Banner, Dec. 9, 1985)

FROM THE GRASS ROOTS:

THE MIRACLE OF LIFE

Several gopher tortoises have established residence on my property in the Ocala National Forest, living free in harmony there. At 4 p.m. on June 26, I came across a female at the burrow entrance and, on top of the entrance mound were three round eggs. Aware of my dogs’ love for eggs (they are always stealing my chicken and duck eggs), I felt it best to bring these in, rather than try to bury them. For those who have never seen gopher tortoise eggs, they are round, white and hard-shelled, about the size of a golf ball, and these measured 2.5 to 3 cm.

The eggs were placed in a plastic container on slightly damp crumpled newspaper, covered with the lid in which were punched a few small perforations for air exchange. Throughout incubation, the average (room) temperature was between 70 and 80°F; no artificial heat source was used. By June 30, the yolks had settled to the bottom half in all the eggs, as seen by candling. During the days that followed, it became obvious that one egg was deteriorating, as evidenced by the shell becoming moist and off-colored. When opened, it revealed no development. Meanwhile solid dark areas could be seen within the other two eggs.

On September 21, I found the two eggs with cracked shells. By the next day, one infant gopher tortoise had hatched, but the other took one more day to fully emerge. On the 23rd, they were measured and found to be 4.5 cm long and 3.8 cm wide. The first hatchling started feeding on the 26th, and the other not long afterward.

About a month after hatching, they had grown to lengths of 5 and 4.5 cm.

These babies will not be put outside permanently until spring or when I am certain they can manage for themselves. They are put out in a covered enclosure on mild days to get some sunshine. They are thriving on a variety of fresh and frozen vegetables, escarole (lettuce is not good as it has only 300 units of Vitamin A, as compared to 10,000 units for the same amount of escarole), cooked sweet potatoes, fresh leaves of sweet potato plants which they love, and occasionally a little very lean ground beef -- no dog food. All the food is lightly dusted with a commercial powdered vitamin (Theralin, ® Vionate, ® Purvinal ®). Crushed egg shells and calcium blocks made of plaster of Paris (calcium carbonate) are also provided.

The youngsters are housed indoors in a flat plastic container 25 x 25 x 6 inches, with natural sand 2 inches deep as substrate. A 12 x 4 inch section of plastic drain pipe provides an artificial burrow, although they have already started to dig in the sand to make a natural burrow. A shallow dish of water is provided and frequently used. During the day, if they are not outdoors, a 75-watt spotlight for heat shines about 6 inches above one entrance to the pipe. They have their choice of light and dark, heat and cold.

The babies are hard-shelled and round as butterballs, and I am pleased that the care I have given them has resulted in success so far, as I understand hatchlings are somewhat difficult to keep alive and well. Photographs were taken of the hatching, so I have some great pictures of the memorable event.

J. M. Floyd
Ocala National Forest

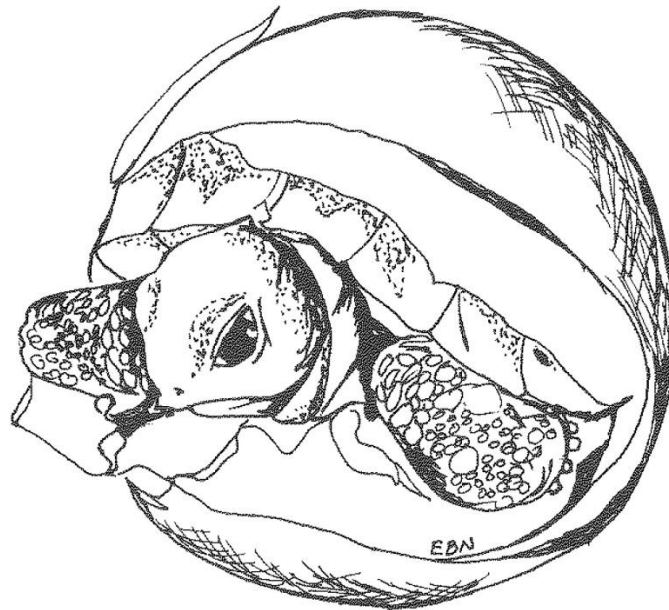


Image: Original artwork for the newsletter of the Gopher Tortoise Council.

BACK TO BUSINESS

The 1983 Proceedings have been mailed. If you paid your 1983 dues or registered at the Valdosta meeting, you should have received your copy. Those who were not members and did not attend the meetings during the appropriate years, may purchase these volumes for \$8.00 per copy. Unfortunately, there are only one or two copies left, and they will not be reprinted.

Also available are back issues of TTB at 50 ¢ per copy; these begin with No. 7 and go through No. 16 (total of ten issues).

The 1984 Proceedings (Gainesville meeting) should be ready and in the mail by January 1986, according to editors Dale Jackson and Rhoda Bryant. Eligible recipients include 1984 members and meeting registrants.

This is also the time to reserve your copy of the 1985 Proceedings of our meeting in Alabama. This volume, which promises to contain many important papers and discussions, is included as part of your GTC membership. It's not too late to pay 1985 dues if you forgot, and you can mail

that along with your current 1986 dues, which are now due. If this box is checked, I have no records of your 1986 dues being paid ☐. Our year begins in early December; not from the date you joined.

I had planed to list the names of those members who contributed over the \$10.00 regular membership fee, and their states in this issue, but space does not allow. Watch for it in the next issue of TTB.

Please send dues and other requests for information on the GTC to ELLEN NICOL, RT. #, BOX #####, ANTHONY, FL. 32617 - ###-###-####.

MEMBERSHIPS

\$100.+ Sustaining Member

25.00 Contributor

25.00 Societies, Clubs, and Groups

10.00 Regular

5.00 Student

STUDENT AWARD INFORMATION

The Student Award for 1986 has so far gone unclaimed, with early March as the deadline for the 1986 Award. The GTC annually presents a cash award to an undergraduate, graduate, or high school student who is conducting research involving the gopher tortoise. The only obligation of the recipient, other than conducting the proposed research, is to submit to the Council a copy of his/her final report within six (6) months of the project completion date and copies of any scientific papers resulting from the research.

Proposals should be short and include a brief biological section (or resume), a description and justification of the research, and a tentative budget.

Proposals should be sent to Dr. Harold Wahlquist, ###-##### Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30088, who is the Chairman of the Review Committee, no later than March 15, 1986

(R.A.G.E.) – Rattlesnake and Gopher Enthusiasts, of San Antonio, FL., has contributed \$100. To the GTC as part of this award.

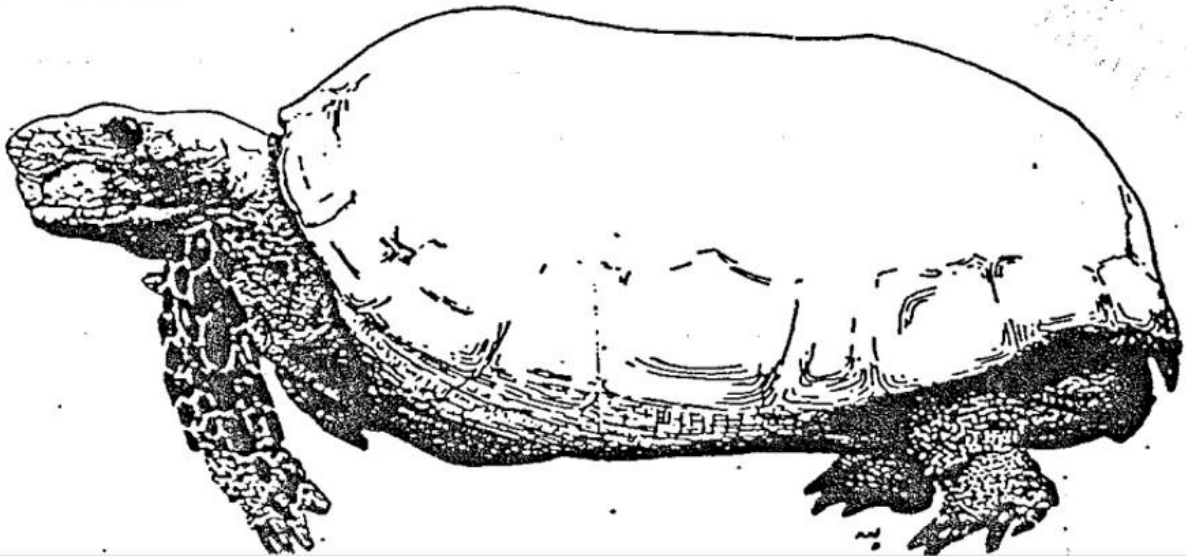


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This document was created and transcribed by Bradley O'Hanlon
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