

The Gopher Tortoise

A Life History

Patricia Sawyer Ashton and Ray E. Ashton Jr.

This colorful look at the life of the gopher tortoise is an important new book on a very important animal. The gopher tortoise is an excellent representation of all the upland wildlife in the Southeast United States. As humans encroach on their habitat, gopher tortoises find themselves in a desperate struggle for territory and food, indeed for the very survival of their species.

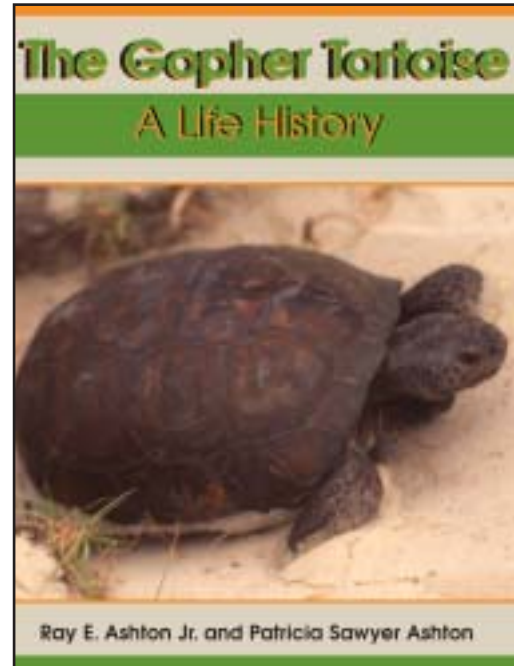
And survive they must. The survival of so many other species depends on them. The burrow of a gopher tortoise provides shelter (and sometimes food) to about 400 other species. Within these dark tunnels made and maintained by the gopher tortoise, species have been found that live nowhere else on earth. And it's not an overstatement to say that the human species depends on the health of the gopher tortoise and its entire natural community.

This book will appeal to all ages, from 10 up. The hundreds of color photos and easy text will appeal to children and to students seeking details not readily available elsewhere. Adults too will find this book provides a detailed and first-rate explanation of the critical role this fascinating tortoise plays in shaping the upland environs of Florida and the Southeast. Individuals and families who enjoy outdoors activities will find this book a virtual guide to many of the plants and animals they see in these areas.

"The Ashtons have spent many years working with tortoises and have used their combined experiences as educators and scientists not only to give insight into the life history of the gopher tortoise but also how we study these animals and how people can be involved in their conservation."

—Richard Franz, Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida, and founder of the Gopher Tortoise Council

Patricia S. and Ray E. Ashton Jr. have worked together as field biologists and educators for nearly thirty years. They have conducted a wide range of studies and projects covering topics from salamander and frog behavior to sustainable tourism and management of protected areas. In 1997, they established Finca de la Tortuga Ashton Biological Preserve. In this one-hundred-acre upland habitat, they have tested management techniques as part of an in-depth study into the foraging of gopher tortoises and other species of reptiles and amphibians. They founded the Ashton Biodiversity Research and Preservation Institute, Inc., and the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (GTICI).



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