

HOW TO IDENTIFY A GOPHER TORTOISE

Gopher Tortoise
Gopherus Polyphemus



IF SEEN ON WORK SITE

If a gopher tortoise or burrow is seen, stop work and immediately contact your Construction Project Administrator (CPA). No work can occur within 25 feet of a tortoise burrow. Work may resume once the tortoise leaves the area on its own.



Adult



Juvenile



Burrow



Burrow

INDIVIDUAL FEATURES

Adults are gray but can have varying colors from light tan to dark brown. Their front legs are shovel-like with stocky hind flattened feet adapted for digging. The top of their shell is relatively flat.

Juveniles are tan or yellow and darken as they mature. They can be as small as 2.5 inches in length.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOR

Occurs in a variety of habitats including along roadsides. Prefer habitats with well drained sandy soils and open canopy including oak hammocks, scrub, pine flatwoods, dry prairies, open fields and coastal dunes.

They generally forage in open areas with low growing, grass-like vegetation.

BURROW FEATURES

Half-moon shape (unlike more rounded burrows of other animals), flat bottom, with a mound of loose sand at the burrow entrance (called an 'apron').

Eggs are laid in the apron of a burrow. Use caution around burrows to avoid any damage to the burrow or eggs.