

THE ASHTON BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION INSTITUTE
A PROGRAM OF
GOPHER TORTOISE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE
A 501-3C NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

2004 SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It was the 6th exciting year for the Institute and the 5th for GTCI. We weathered two hits by hurricanes that did no damage and refilled our two natural ponds that have been dry for more than two years. We have had quite a busy year in our educational and research efforts as well as our proactive efforts to encourage a good conservation strategy by the Florida Wildlife Commission.

EDUCATION

A NEW BOOK

The Ashton's postponed the completion of their natural history and management book on gopher tortoises (Krieger Publ), and the Proceedings of the International Roundtable on Chelonian Relocation and Assurance Colonies to produce a new book for the general public. The book titled *Gopher Tortoise, A Life History* published by Pineapple Press is the first book on Gopher Tortoises that is scientifically accurate and goes into details of all aspects of the tortoise's natural history, habitat, management, and conservation. It is in full color and has more than 100 photographs. This book can be ordered at WWW.ashtonbiodiversity.org or at your local bookstore.

BOOK CHALLENGE GRANT

Board Member MC Davis provided a challenge grant to GTCI and FWC to match \$15,000 to purchase books for school libraries across the state. As of this writing, Thanks to a number of groups and individuals and FWC, it appears that match will be met and approximately 1500 copies will be distributed to schools across the state.

GTCI COURSES AND PROGRAMS

Although the course participation was down, still more than 200 professionals participated in courses on habitat management and monitoring, reserve management, and tortoise management and study techniques. This brings the number of professionals trained to approximately 2200. Lectures and workshops were given in 12 locations in 2004 with more than 1000 participants.

INTERNSHIPS

There were 8 interns who studied and worked at the Reserve for 3 to 12 months. The interns were from the Netherlands (2), Germany, England, Bangladesh, University of Florida, New College, Eckert College, and the state of Washington.

RESEARCH

Exciting is an understatement. We worked with the National Science Foundation and the Fauna Communications Research Institute to discover that tortoises use low frequency sound to communicate. We concluded 11 years of research on how to conduct successful gopher tortoise relocation and our book The Natural History and Management of the Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) was submitted to the publisher. Our work on tortoise behavior and assurance colonies continues. We are currently cooperating with 7 other institutions on projects.

FOR MORE DETAILS ON PROJECTS PLEASE GO TO OUR WEB PAGE
WWW.ASHTONBIODIVERSITY.ORG