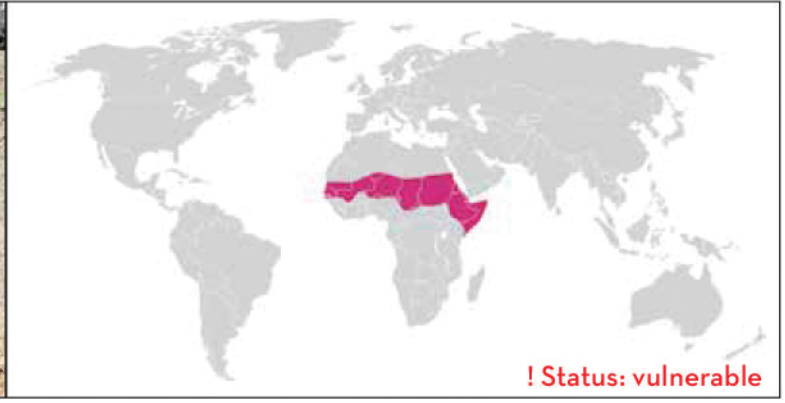
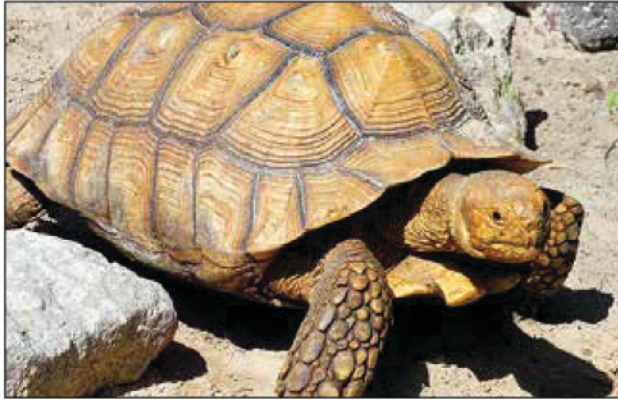


AFRICAN SPURRED TORTOISE

updated March 2017



Range	Central and northern Africa in dry regions
Habitat	Dry regions, woodlands, and semi desert grass and shrub land
Diet (wild)	Grasses and plants, high in fiber and very low in protein; feeding of fruit should be avoided
Diet (captivity)	
Description	Height: 26–35 inches; weight: 110 pounds. Carapace (back shell) is uniform brown; plastron (front shell), head, and limbs are a yellowish color. Juveniles have a pale yellow carapace with brown on the scutes. The head is moderately large with a doubly hooked upper jaw. The upper head scales are small and irregular. The carapace sides descend abruptly and are deeply notched. The growth rings on the scutes are very well defined. The front legs have large scales and the back legs have 2–3 large conical tubercules (spurs) on either side of the tail. Externally, it is hard to tell males from females; males have slightly longer, thicker tails and a more concave plastron.
Lifespan	30–50 years
Reproduction	The female digs a nest and eggs are laid and covered with soil. They incubate for 212 days in the wild (136 days in captivity). Hatchlings emerge 1–3 days after a rain, usually at night or early morning, and it takes 3–10 days for the hatchlings to the surface. Mating occurs during the rainy season (February–March) for about one week and may be repeated several times in one day. Breeding males aggressively fight each other for access to females.
Behavior	African spurred tortoises can burrow very well and tend to be more active when it rains and become inactive when very hot or very cold. They can also survive extended drought periods in self-dug burrows. Some burrows are permanent and will be shared by two tortoises. Adult males hiss when approached too closely and may retreat or burrow. African spurred tortoises are frequently aggressive, ramming and biting each other. Females do the same, as well as make croaking noises and throw their rear part of their shell violently about. Females may also raise their shell off the ground and drop it, creating a loud thud.
Our animals	2 males. Arrived at PPZ in 07/1999 and 01/2005. Birthplace unknown (private donation)
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African spurred tortoises are the third-largest species of tortoise in the world. • African spurred tortoises like to burrow and are well adapted at doing it. • African spurred tortoises are very aggressive towards each other. This aggression starts from the time they hatch. Ramming into each other and attempts to flip each other over are common behaviors by males and they sometimes end up with bloody limbs and heads. • Some African cultures regard the spurred tortoise as a mediator between men and the gods. As a result, a tortoise is often kept in villages to intercede between the head of the village and the ancestors. In Dogon countries today, a tortoise is kept with the village leader at all times to allow him to communicate with the village ancestors. In Senegal, the tortoises are signs of virtue, happiness, fertility, and longevity. The Senegalese respect the symbolic nature of the tortoise and are very important in helping conservationists ensure reproduction and repopulation of the species.

Phylum
ChordataClass
ReptiliaOrder
TestudinesFamily
TestudinidaeGenus
Geochelonespecies
G. sulcata