

The Gopher Tortoise

Behavior:

Gopher tortoise depend on the sun to get the warmth that they need making them ectothermic, or cold blooded. They are most active during the day and can spend up to 80% of their time in a burrow. Gopher tortoise are keystone species meaning other species in their ecosystem depend on them. That ecosystem would change drastacially if the gopher tortoise was removed.

Identification:

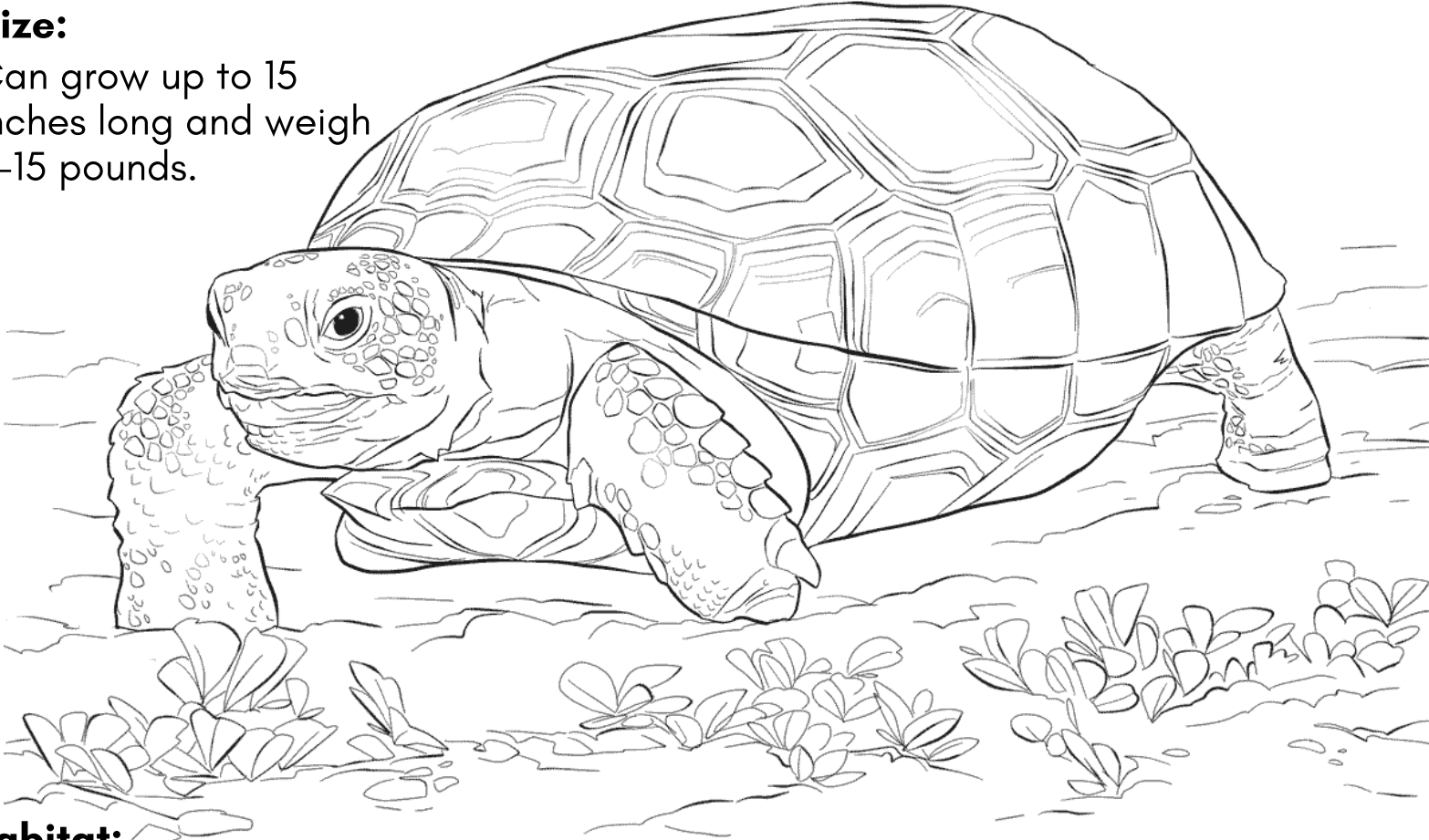
The carapace or shell of a gopher tortoise is usually brown or tan in color. Their back feet are not webbed but more like stumps and their front feet are shovel-like and adapted for digging. In younger tortoises, their shells have visible growth rings, which can be used to estimate or guess their age. In older tortoises, their shells are much smoother.

Diet:

Herbivores and known to feed op to 400 different species of plants.

Size:

Can grow up to 15 inches long and weigh 8-15 pounds.



Habitat:

Dry, sandy soils in scrub, coastal dunes, pine and scrubby flatwoods, and prairie areas.