**Press Release**

**{DATE OF RELEASE}**

**Contact:** {NAME, PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL}

**Celebrate Gopher Tortoise Day on April 10**

{NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION} encourages all Alabamians to celebrate Gopher Tortoise Day on April 10.

Gopher Tortoise Day was started by the [Gopher Tortoise Council](http://www.gophertortoisecouncil.org/), a group formed in 1978 by southeastern biologists and other citizens concerned with the decline of the species. The gopher tortoise is a large land turtle that lives in burrows it digs in sandy soil. Many other species, such as the Eastern indigo snake and the gopher frog, use the burrow for refuge. Gopher tortoises are herbivores that feed primarily on wiregrass, broadleaf grasses, legumes and nonlegume forbs.

{DETAILS ABOUT YOUR EVENT: WHEN, WHERE, DATE AND TIME}

ADCNR’s Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) is encouraging individuals and organizations to assist in the conservation of this important species by adopting a Gopher Tortoise Day in their communities to increase awareness and appreciation for these long-lived, gentle reptiles.

In Alabama, gopher tortoises are state and federally protected and found in 23 counties in the lower third of the state. They are frequently encountered in neighborhoods, along roadways and on many of the state’s private and public lands.

Gopher tortoises are a keystone species because they dig huge underground burrows that provide refuge for over 360 other wildlife species. Among the species that benefit from sharing its burrows are the gopher frog, Eastern indigo snake and hundreds of invertebrates like beetles and crickets. Without gopher tortoise burrows, many of these species might not survive.

{STATEMENT ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION’S MISSION AND WEBSITE ADDRESS}

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