



African Spurred Tortoise

Geochelone sulcata



Dewey

I was born on **July 3rd, 2004**, and arrived at the Racine Zoo in 2013. During the warm summer months, I live next to the gift shop, but spend the winter months off-exhibit to keep me safe from the harsh winter weather. Make sure to come say "hi!" if you see me out and about!

AFRICAN SPURRED TORTOISE AT A GLANCE



- The 3rd largest tortoise species in the world after Galapagos and Aldabra, and the largest African mainland tortoise.
- They are named after the spur-like scales on their forelimbs that act as protection when they tuck into their shell.
- African spurred tortoises are well adapted for burrowing, due to their long claws and strong front legs. When the weather gets too hot or too cold for them, they retreat to a burrow.
- These tortoises have broad, oval, flattened shells that are brown to yellow in color.
- In the wild, African spurred tortoises eat grasses, flowers, weeds, and cacti.
- At the zoo, they eat mixed produce, hay, and greens.



Male:
30in
120+ lbs

Female:
20 in
65-75 lbs



Avg. life expectancy in native habitats: years
Avg. life expectancy in human care: 54 years

WHERE ARE AFRICAN SPURRED TORTOISE HABITATS LOCATED?



Occur along the southern edge of the Sahara, from Senegal and Mauritania east through Mali, Niger, Chad, the Sudan, Ethiopia, along the Red Sea in Eritrea. African Spurred Tortoise lives in hot, arid environments of the Sahelian type. These areas range from desert fringes to dry savannahs. Standing water is only around for limited amounts of time.

African Spurred Tortoise Behaviors

SLEEPING

This species of tortoise is crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk.

If I am sleeping, please do not tap on my glass or yell to wake me up as I enjoy my beauty sleep.



DIGGING

Due to the sizzling hot climate where this tortoise lives, they often dig dens up to 10 feet deep to cool themselves down.

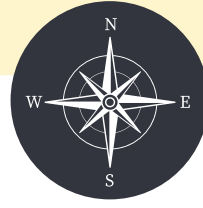
I like to dig in the mud and sandy areas of my habitat.



EXPLORING

In the wild, the Spurred Tortoise will travel 2-3 miles in search of food or water.

I can often be seen exploring my habitat by walking the perimeter of my fence. I am a notorious escape artist, and it takes two keepers to get me back home.



BASKING

Reptiles, like the Spurred Tortoise, are cold blooded; meaning they require an external heat source to stay warm.

You can often see me laying out in the sun and staying out till the sun goes down.



- The African Spurred Tortoise is also commonly known as the Sulcata Tortoise.
- This tortoise can go weeks without food or water. When it finds water it can drink up to 15 percent of its body weight.
- It is common in all ages for them to try to push another tortoise onto its back, and males can be aggressive when fighting over territory or partners.
- In Senegal, these tortoises, are signs of virtue, happiness, fertility, and longevity. Therefore, it is easier to promote programs that support the conservation of the tortoise. The Senegalese respect the symbolic nature of the tortoise and are very important in helping conservationists ensure reproduction and repopulation of it.

African Spurred Tortoise Conservation

Wild populations of the African spurred tortoise have declined rapidly in the face of habitat loss, largely because of urbanization, overgrazing by domestic livestock--leading to desertification.

African Spurred Tortoises are currently listed as **endangered** resulting from habitat loss and fragmentation. The international pet trade also poses an issue for the wild capturing of this species.



How can we help?

Wild African spurred tortoises are sold in the illegal wildlife trade. Many people buy products made from tortoiseshell, which results in a decrease in the wild population. As a consumer, you can fight illegal wildlife trade by avoiding products made from real tortoiseshell, such as barrettes, brushes, ornaments or jewelry.