

Leopard Tortoise

Scientific Name: *Stigmochelys Pardalis*

Class: Reptilia

Order: Testudines

Family: Testudinidae



Leopard Tortoise averages about 2 feet long and weighs about 70 pounds, but there is a wide range of sizes. It has a highly domed carapace without a definite margin. The coloration is usually a tawny yellow or buff. Younger specimens have an unbroken black line around each scute. Older specimens have black spots or sometimes very dense broken radiations. Markings vary with the latitude and elevation; those above 6,000 feet are larger and have more distinct markings than those below 4,000 feet. The large forelegs are covered with horny plates.

Range

The range of the leopard tortoise is Southwest Africa.

Habitat

Leopard tortoises inhabit savannas with abundant vegetation.

Gestation

Gestation is 8 to 18 months.

Litter

Clutch size is 5 to 30 eggs.

Behavior

Leopard tortoise males compete with females in shoving matches until one is overturned. Females may also ram males or other females. When a captive individual is suffering from a calcium deficiency, indicated by a soft shell, they will eat the bones of small animals.

Reproduction

During copulation the leopard tortoise male utters a loud husky cry. Females nest in the spring season (September-October) after urinating on the ground to soften it. The depressions are not very deep. Eggs are hard shelled spheres about 1.5 inches in diameter. If many eggs are to be laid, the female will separate the layers of eggs with dirt. Size and number of eggs varies with locality. Their chief predators are hawks and crows.

Wild Diet

Watermelon, fallen fruit, grass, toadstools, thistles, prickly pear pumpkins, beans