

WELCOME!

Believe it or not, more than 350 different kinds of animals may share a gopher tortoise's burrow. Most, such as lizards and toads, slip in on occasion for some of the same reasons the tortoise does. Some, such as spiders and snakes, go in to find food. And some, such as the gopher cricket, live nowhere else on Earth!

The gopher tortoise doesn't seem to mind any of these house-guests. They just get out of the way as the tortoise comes and goes. When a gopher tortoise leaves a burrow for good, animals such as foxes or burrowing owls may take it over for raising young.

This **SIX-LINED RACERUNNER** might seek shelter in a tortoise burrow. It might even lay eggs in the warm sand outside the burrow's entrance.



At the bottom of the burrow is a roomy **END CHAMBER**. The tortoise spends most of its time in here.

- 1 burrowing owl
- 2 northern bobwhite
- 3 wolf spider
- 4 whip scorpion
- 5 Florida mouse
- 6 eastern diamondback rattlesnake
- 7 little gopher tortoise scarab beetle
- 8 gopher tortoise shell moth
- 9 gopher tick
- 10 mole skink
- 11 gopher frog
- 12 gopher cricket
- 13 gopher tortoise burrow fly
- 14 spotted skunk



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As the tortoise digs, it sweeps up rich soil from below—good for sprouting seeds. This soil forms a sandy **APRON** at the front of the burrow.



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The **BURROW ENTRANCE** is easy to recognize, with its half-circle shape.

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Small mammals such as this **EASTERN COTTONTAIL** may scurry into a tortoise's burrow to escape fire or a predator.

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The **INDIGO SNAKE** is a threatened species that has already disappeared from much of its range. It often uses a tortoise burrow as its winter den.

THE GOPHER TORTOISE IS A KEYSTONE SPECIES. THAT MEANS MANY OTHER SPECIES DEPEND ON IT FOR THEIR SURVIVAL.