

Yellow-footed Tortoise

Geochelone denticulata

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Reptilia
Order Testudines
Family Testudinidae

Native to: South America

Status: Vulnerable

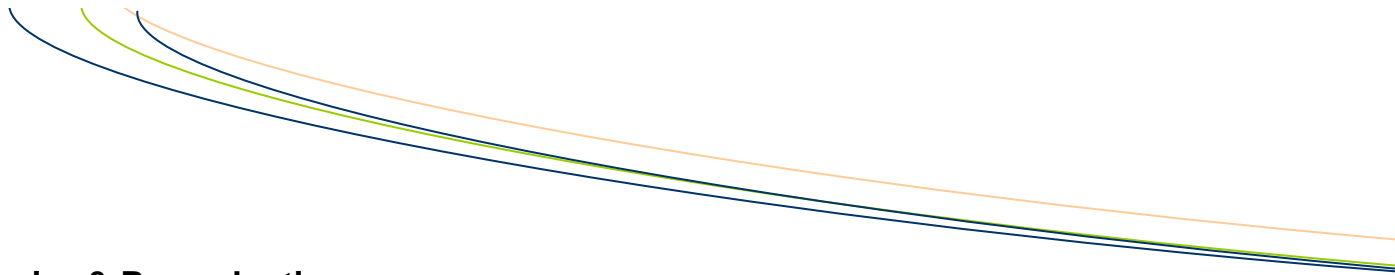


The biggest threat to the survival of yellow-footed tortoise is over-hunting by man. Yellow-foots are collected in large numbers and shipped to many different South American cities to be sold as a delicacy. Another threat facing yellow-foot populations is the ever-present habitat loss and disturbance. Exportation for the pet trade also has a negative effect on yellow-footed tortoises, although it is much less of a threat to their survival than either hunting or habitat loss. Conservation efforts include the establishment and protection of wildlife reserves and national parks, where yellow-footed tortoises and other animals are protected from hunting.

Appearance & Lifespan

The Yellow Footed Tortoise is black and has several yellow head scales and a horizontal bar behind its eye. There is quite a bit of variation in coloring, the legs and head often have patches of orange, yellow or red. The shell top is black with a small, distinct yellow area around each shell scale. The underside, or plastron, is a bland yellow-brown colour and the male tortoises tend to have a concave plastron. They range in length from 30-76 cm. to a maximum of 34 pounds. Female tortoises tend to grow larger than the males. Yellow-footed tortoises can live 50 to 60 years.





Behavior & Reproduction

These turtles make a sound like a baby cooing with a raspy voice. Tortoises also identify each other using body language. The male tortoise makes head movements toward other males, but the females do not make these head movements. Male tortoises also swing their heads back and forth in a continuous rhythm as a mating ritual. Mating occurs all year round for the Yellow Footed Tortoise.

The Yellow Footed Tortoise reaches the age of maturity at about 8-10 years. The number of eggs laid by a female generally depends on the size, the bigger they are, the more eggs they can produce. On average, a female will create approximately 6-16 eggs per year, although some female individuals may not reproduce each year. The eggs have brittle shells and are elongated to spherical, approximately 3-6 cm in diameter. The egg size will increase with the body size of the turtle. The young are self-sufficient from birth.

Ecology & Habitat

Yellow Footed Tortoises are found in South America. During recent times, humans have spread these tortoises throughout the world by trade. These tortoises like to build their nests in the dense rain forest, the tropical lowlands, or hidden in the growth of a thick forest.

This South American tortoise eats many kinds of foliage. They are too slow to capture any fast animals. In the wild, their diet consist of grasses, fallen fruit, camion, plants, bones, mushrooms, excrement, and slow moving animals such as snails, worms, and others they are able to capture.

At the zoo the yellow-footed tortoise is fed mixed vegetables including peas, corn, lettuce, cucumber, and other greens.

Did You Know?

1. Tortoises have domed carapaces (top shell) that offer protection from the snapping jaws of terrestrial predators.
2. The shell of tortoise is made of 60 different bones and all are connected to each other.
3. Tortoises do not have teeth.

