

GOPHER TORTOISE PRESERVE PROPOSED

by Marc and Maria Minno

Last summer a conservation project was initiated by the Broward Native Plant Society to preserve a unique area of Broward County. The area is an 18-acre remnant of scrub habitat located at the north end of the Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport. Efforts to preserve the site were begun when it was learned that the City of Fort Lauderdale is planning to develop the area.

Scrub is thought to be one of the oldest plant communities in the state. This desert-like habitat developed on deep, well-drained sand deposits (such as ancient coastlines) only in Florida. Many of the plants found in scrub habitats have thick, hard or leathery leaves, aromatic oils, and allelopathic chemicals that help reduce water loss, herbivory, and competition from other plants. The scrub community also includes animals that have become specialized to the harsh, dry conditions. As many as 40 to 60 percent of the scrub plants and animals are so specific that they can live no place else.

Scrub is developed nearly out of existence in Broward County. The area proposed for preservation is richly diverse, dominated by shrubs which are distributed in patches separated by areas of low-growing annual and perennial herbs and open sand barrens. The dominant species are rosemary, scrub oaks, blueberry, and *Lyonia*. This community, termed rosemary scrub, is the rarest and most diverse of all the eight different types of scrub habitat. It supports many unusual, and at least nine Threatened, plant species. In addition, the Florida scrub lizard, a few unusual butterflies, and a viable community of gopher tortoise remain on the site. Unusual invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals often use the burrow dug by the gopher tortoise. Several rare species have evolved to be completely dependent upon the tortoise, and it is likely that some of these occur on the site. The tortoise is the focus of our preservation effort.

Some of the special plants found in the area include:

1. *Conradina grandiflora* — Under review for listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Listed as Threatened on Smithsonian's list of species proposed for inclusion on the U.S. list.
2. *Asclepias curtissii* — Threatened, Fla. Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Preservation of Native Flora of Fla. Act. Threatened, Fla. Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals.
3. *Lechea cernua* — Under review, U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Threatened, Smithsonian.
4. *Monotropa brittonii* — Under review by U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Threatened, Smithsonian.
5. *Sabal etonia* — Threatened, Fla. Dept. of Agriculture.
6. *Selaginella arenicola* — Threatened, F.D.A.
7. *Tillandsia circinata*, *T. fasciculata*, *T. utriculata* — Threatened, F.D.A.
8. *Tillandsia flexuosa* — Threatened, F.D.A. and Fla. Comm. on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals.

members to consider joining the Natural Areas Association. NAA is a national, nonprofit organization of professionals and volunteers interested in the identification and preservation of natural areas. The quarterly **Natural Areas Journal** is an excellent forum for the discussion of new ideas and techniques related to natural areas protection.

Native plants, of course, are best preserved *in situ* in natural areas. Natural areas are native ecosystems. Yet we really know little about managing these areas for long-term survival. Those in the NAA are committed to furthering our collective knowledge in this area.

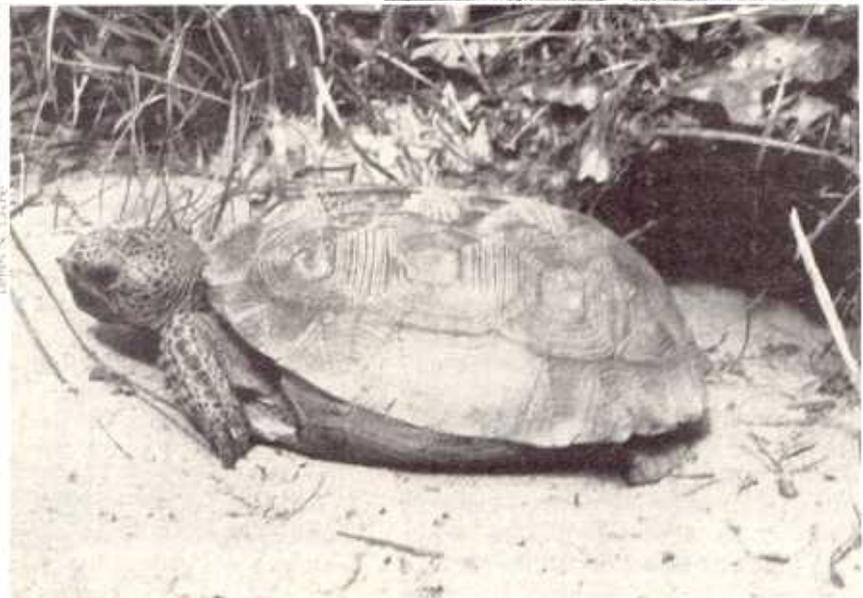
Membership in the Natural Areas Association costs \$10 per year and includes the journal subscription. Forward to Natural Areas Association, 320 South Third Street, Rockford, Illinois 61108.

Reed F. Noss
Managed Area Specialist

Dear Mr. Partington,

Enclosed is a check for my membership in FCF, and a gift FNPS membership for a very good customer. This is something for other nurseries to consider: customers who show interest in natives and purchase above a certain amount are given a free one-year membership in FNPS. Renewals are likely to follow, given the high quality of **The Palmetto**.

What do you think about the idea?
Richard Moyroud
Mesozoic Landscapes, Inc.



Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)