

Small Worlds Around Us
By Lynn W. Watkins
(Register & Tribune Syndicate, 1962)

Might Be Dumb Turtle But He Won His Point
In many sections of the Southeastern United States lives the land tortoise, commonly called a gopher turtle. He dislikes water, utters a peculiar cry when injured, and lives in a deep hole in the ground which he digs himself... always on land that is very dry and sandy.

He is related to the giant tortoise of the Galapagos Islands, and like them, is a true land turtle. He blunders along in the pinelands on awkward club feet more suited to digging than to walking. He feeds on weeds, grass, leaves and insects. Some are not averse to killing and eating a mouse, a shrew or a frog.

Like all the turtle clan, the gopher tortoise is pretty stupid. Those who know him well say he is about as dumb as he could possibly be and still live. It would seem ridiculous to credit one of these creatures with the faintest shred of sense.

Yet one performed a series of actions so unusual that it seemed worthy of public record. The incidents happened directly under the observation of a lady who had a well-enclosed patio as a part of her back yard.

Turtle At Work
The lady had been gathering flowers in her garden when she noticed a gopher turtle digging a hole under a bush. She had no idea where it came from or why, but it acted very much at home. The lady thought the turtle must be very old because of the dilapidated appearance; its shell was badly broken around the edges.

Investigation, however, disclosed the fact that the turtle was not old, but what few years it had lived had evidently been tough. Only a section of the tail remained. One club foot was completely healed, although at one time it had been badly damaged. Several claws on other feet were missing; the head, too, had been torn open at one time, but had healed.

The animal moved slowly, even after being quiet under the bush for several days. When it moved at all, it did so with apparent effort, as if every step was a trying ordeal. The lady thought the tiredness was the result of the animal having crawled a great distance before it arrived in the garden.

The lady allowed the turtle to remain, and it seemed disposed to stay. She figured, however, the patio was no place for a turtle, so one afternoon she picked the animal up and carried it down the street a couple of blocks where a small grove of trees grew beside a drainage ditch. She put the animal down and returned home.

Weeds and small growth offered some protection; there was plenty of grass to eat. The lady thought she had performed a favor.

Back in Garden
By evening the turtle was back in the garden under the same bush. The following day she again took the unprotesting turtle in hand and tried again. This time she carried him across two streets and on down the road several city blocks. She placed the turtle on the ground and headed him away from her home. She hurried back the way she had come confident that she was at last free of her silent visitor.

The next day the turtle was back under the bush. He was awake when she found him, but seemed as tired as ever. There is no reasonable explanation for the behavior of this supposedly stupid turtle. Neither can his actions be entirely instinctive as none of his ancestors ever lived in a patio.

Why he came to the garden in the first place is not as mysterious as why he returned, or why he wanted to remain in that shallow hole under the bush.

Anyway, it's home now, for the lady has resigned herself to her tired, silent visitor and roomer.

BEES STAY PUT
Newlyn, England—(UPI)—Mr. and Mrs. Harold Andrews have used fire, vacuum cleaners and fly swatters in vain efforts to displace hundreds of bees in their brick-up fireplace. Today they said they have hired a workman to tear down a wall of their home to get at the bees.

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