



Desert Tortoise

Gopherus Agassizii

- Pedro is currently in his late 60's.
- Desert tortoises spend the majority of their time hiding in the shade of shrubs and rocks from the hot desert sun.
- They are built to thrive in their desert environments. They can fully retract their heads and legs inside the shell when disturbed, protecting the softer body parts from predators. Although mortality is high for young tortoises, once they reach adulthood desert tortoises are rarely killed by predators.
- They are a keystone species, which means other organisms depend on them to survive. Without them, an ecosystem would either evolve or collapse. Many other species use their burrows and benefit from having desert tortoises around.
- Our tortoises get a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables daily some of which are grown in our aquaponics system right next door!

PEDRO was found when he repetitively showed up at an active construction site. Therefore, little is known about his history, including his actual age, but best guesses put Pedro over 60 years old. Since he is an endangered species, it is illegal to own a Desert tortoise without a special license in North Carolina, so he was donated to the Catawba Science Center.



Pedro