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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Leopard Tortoise

Stigmochelys pardalis

Stigmochelys pardalis is a large, calm, herbivorous tortoise from the savannas of Africa with black and yellow leopard spots on a high-domed shell. It typically grows to about 40 cm and can live for 50-100 years. It therefore needs a very large outdoor enclosure in summer, warmth and UVB indoors for the rest of the year and a high-fibre diet of grasses and wild plants.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Geochelone pardalis; Testudo pardalis* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**30-45 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**13,000-20,000 g**
Lifespan	**50-100 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and savanna**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**320 × 160 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-32 °C**
Basking spot	**35-40 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**40-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**5-30 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-7**
Incubation	**150-450 days** at 28-32 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Adult animals need an outdoor enclosure when the weather permits, in Denmark typically only in the warmest summer months (see Temperature). A pair can be kept in about 3 × 3 m, but more is better.

TEMPERATURE

Indoors keep 24-32 °C by day, and the basking spot should be about 35 °C. For the related *Centrochelys sulcata* 38-41 °C is given for the basking spot, and the 35-40 °C in the fact box covers both.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity is not documented for the species; 40-70 % in the enclosure is an estimate. The species comes from savanna and semi-arid areas and is not a humid-climate species.

LIGHTING AND UVB

UVB or natural sunlight is necessary, because otherwise the animal does not produce vitamin D3 and cannot absorb and use the calcium. Ferguson zone 3 is an estimate.

FEEDING

S. pardalis is a grazer and needs a high-fibre, calcium-rich diet. Grazing is the foundation: mixed grasses and herbs, which you can grow yourself in the enclosure, for example lucerne and grasses.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

S. pardalis is diurnal, shy and calm. It withdraws its head and legs when disturbed, but with time learns to know its keeper and goes over for food. It should be handled rarely and is not a pet for small children.

NATIVE RANGE

South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo - Kinshasa, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Eswatini and Lesotho.