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\$7,200 reward offered in case involving gopher tortoise killings

WFLA Web Staff
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LAKEWOOD RANCH, Fla. (WFLA) – A \$7,200 reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest of the person responsible for the disturbing killing of two state-protected gopher tortoises.

On June 8, children found the two tortoises on a bicycle path in Lakewood Ranch. One of the tortoises was found dead with its shell cracked, and the other was in a pool of its own blood. Neither tortoise survived the attack.

The Center for Biological Diversity on Monday added \$5,000 to the reward for information leading to an arrest in the case, bringing the reward total to \$7,200.

“It’s deeply disturbing that someone would harm these gentle, defenseless creatures,” said Elise Bennett, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity Center.



“Someone probably has information that can lead the authorities to the person who committed this cruel, illegal act of violence,” Bennett added. “I hope they can find it within themselves to share that information and give justice to these tortoises and the communities that loved them.”

Florida law prohibits any person from killing or wounding gopher tortoises, which are protected as threatened in the state. Violating the law is a third-degree felony and punishable by up to five years in prison, a \$5,000 fine or both. Anyone with information should contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 888-404-FWCC (3922) or Tip@MyFWC.com.