



Galapagos Giant Tortoise (*Geochelone elephantopus*) with **Giant Prickly Pear Cactus** (*Opuntia echios* Howell). Perhaps the best known of all the Galapagos Islands animals, the giant tortoise can weigh over 500 pounds and live more than 100 years. During the 1800s, their numbers were considerably reduced by whalers and fur sealers, who killed them for food and oil. Active much of the day, the

tortoises are vegetarians and eat a wide variety of plants. In mating season, the females lay between two and sixteen eggs the size of tennis balls. Coloring ranges from gray and black to dull brown. The giant prickly pear cactus has reddish-brown bark and branches at the top with green oval pads covered with clusters of long spines. These cacti are food for tortoises and land iguanas.