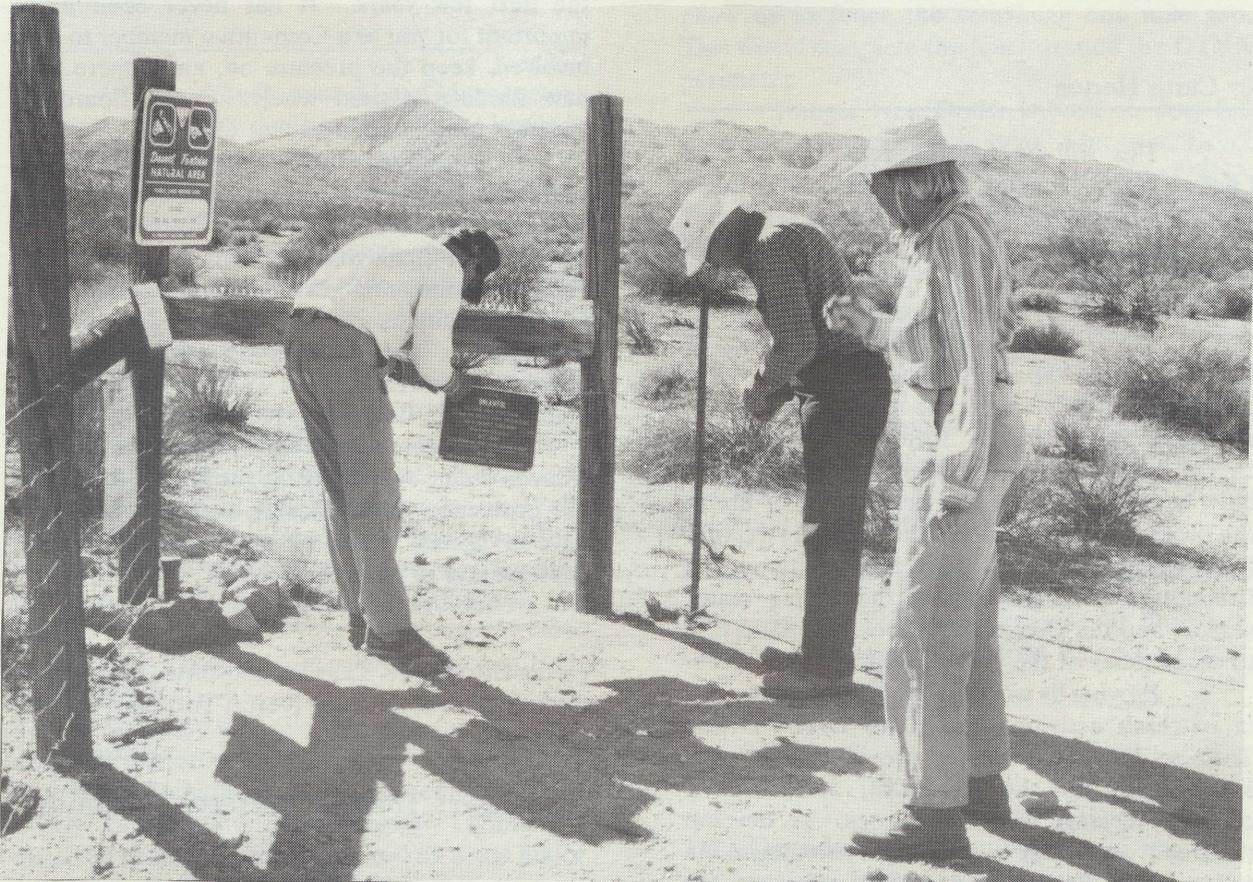


Tortoise Tracks

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Newsletter

Winter 1991

11:4



Fence Workparty (left to right) Will Watson, Ron Henry and Mary Ann Henry are shown volunteering on October 20, 1990 to maintain the Desert Tortoise Natural Area.

Fourteen Volunteer for October Work Party

On Saturday, October 20th, 14 volunteers helped maintain the Desert Tortoise Natural Area.

Only two major fence repairs were necessary. A total of 124 signs were placed around the perimeter of the Natural Area. The kiosk and outhouses were scrubbed inside and out. The exterior of the outhouses were repaired and

painted, including restoration of the creosote motif by Sue Dallons. Five carsonite posts that mark the self-guided nature trails were also replaced.

The 14 volunteers that helped make the event a success are: Cathy O'Conner of the Bureau of Land Management, Marv Cornett, Roger Dale, Sue and Willis Dallons, Warren Forgey, Mary Ann and Ron Henry, Phil Lahmeyer, Mimi Loutrel, Barbara Maxwell, Bev Steveson, Doug Tamren, and Will Watson. The Committee is grateful to those who volunteer in the continuing maintenance of the Natural Area.

Lifeline Fund Report

By Curtis Horton

This will be my last report to you as Lifeline Fund Director for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. In my over three years with the Committee, we have made tremendous strides in habitat acquisition and protection, and in developing our conservation education resources.

The Committee now has an independent land acquisition capability, allowing us to perform a vital role by purchasing the many small parcels remaining in the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. In the past year, fifteen parcels worth \$50,000 have been acquired by the Committee, or are in the process. Stewardship of the Natural Area has been greatly improved with the addition of a Committee Naturalist during the Spring visitor season, and the Committee hopes to expand that to other times of the year as well.

Proving its worth at the Natural Area and in outreach activities, the Keith Drake Desert Tortoise Discovery Center provides office and living space for the Naturalist, and sends a dramatic message wherever it goes. To develop the Discovery Center's educational potential to the fullest, new displays and exhibit materials are being prepared, and support for a full-time school and public outreach program is being sought.

The past few years have been difficult ones for the desert tortoise, but public awareness of the problem and support for conservation measures and recovery efforts has grown significantly. The Committee can be proud of the major contributions we have made to increase public awareness and marshal concern about the serious threats to the desert tortoise and the entire desert ecosystem. In turn, this has helped break the bureaucratic logjam to at last get meaningful federal and state protection for the desert tortoise.

New resources are slowly becoming available to stop the decline of the tortoise and help it recover. As communities respond to the federal threatened listing, much more funding may

be directed toward desert tortoise conservation in the next few years. It has never been more important for you as a Committee member to stay involved, keep the pressure on, and ensure that new funding is used wisely. Your Board of Trustees is committed to that effort.

It has been a privilege to get to know the wonderful people who are Committee volunteers and members. You are a dedicated, talented bunch, and I thank you for all you have taught me about environmental activism and concern for our fellow inhabitants on this Earth. And one in particular: that fascinating, engaging, and mysterious desert tortoise. Your help and many kindnesses are deeply appreciated.

As I continue to work to keep us humans from crowding everything off the face of the globe, the protection of the desert tortoise will always have a special place in my concerns for the conservation of nature.

Curtis Horton served as the Executive Director of the Lifeline Fund for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee

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Curtis Horton	Executive Director of the Lifeline Fund

From the BLM Corner

By Bob Parker

The Bureau of Land Management has been busy lately dealing with tortoise issues in the Western Mojave. We're getting under way with the Western Mojave Tortoise Management Plan, with the Preplan nearing completion. This 'preplan' will provide information about the Plan within BLM and to those outside the agency. The Project Proposal will follow with more detail incorporating information received. The Plan itself will evolve over a period of almost two years with public involvement along the way and will incorporate the efforts of other endeavors such as the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. We plan to coordinate the City of Ridgecrest's Indian Wells Valley Habitat Conservation Plan and other HCPs. We are looking forward to working with the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee in this effort.

The Quarantine/Road Closure has been lifted so the DTNA is once again open to visitors. Formal Section 7 Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Rand Mountains/Fremont Valley Management Plan is nearly completed. A Biological Opinion is expected soon and we have agreed on some major actions.

The Plan calls for a reduction in mileage of existing routes which may be upwards of 75 to 80 percent. Other changes will be the elimination of sheep grazing for ten years over 50 per cent of the Management area and a withdrawal of mining activity over much of the area. The development of the plan involved considerable public involvement and was done with the understanding that the BLM's primary tool in managing resources is the management of human activities.

The Honda Project is beginning its second season of irrigation in the DTNA. In early November the sprinklers began putting out the first cycle of 1 1/2 inches of water. They plan to repeat this 3 more times over the watering period. It will be interesting to see what species of plants come up this spring.

Two parcels in the northern tip of the DTNA are now BLM land and we plan to fence these portions within two years, sooner if funds become available. We are acquiring the remaining land within section 31 on the west side which will allow us to fence the remaining one mile gap. This would complete the fence around the DTNA perimeter.

Ranger Don Dollar is back on duty full time after a special assignment. Our new "Don't pick up tortoises" signs are up around the DTNA and look very nice. The number of studies going on in and around the DTNA remain high. When the DTNA was established as a Research Natural Area, some far-sighted individuals must have envisioned the need for an area where a large number of studies could take place. It looks like even more research will be coming in the future. A study on the impacts of grazing from a long-term historical perspective by Kathryn Thomas is just one example. Dr. Kristin Berry of BLM's Riverside office has the complete rundown.

Bob Parker is a Wildlife Biologist at the Bureau of Land Management's Ridgecrest Resource Area.

Two Decades of Conservation Honored

Dr. Kristin Berry Receives Conservation Award from Southwestern Herpetologists Society

On November 6, 1990, the Southwestern Herpetologists Society presented Dr. Kristin Berry with a Conservation Award for her outstanding efforts to save the desert tortoise and its habitat during the last two decades. Included with the award was a gift of \$200 for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Dr. Berry's favored charity. The Southwestern Herpetologists Society has grown substantially in the last 10 years and is now the third largest regional herpetological society in the United States.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SHANNON GINN'S TOUR AS NATURALIST

Shannon Ginn served as a Naturalist at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area interpretive center during the spring of 1990. Shannon and tour guides from the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee greeted about 983 visitors and Shannon estimates that she interacted with about 95% of all who visited the Natural Area during her two and a half month tour of duty.

Visitor use in 1990 was about half that of 1989, when no restrictions on visitor use were imposed. Decline in visitation was probably due to widespread publicity about the BLM-administered quarantine, reduction in hours the Natural Area was open, and the continuing drought conditions.

According to Shannon, most visitors came to the Natural Area after reading about it in travel guides, magazines, or newspapers or hearing of it on television. Some visitors were members of The Natural Conservancy, whereas others owned pet tortoises and had heard of the area through their chapters of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club. Many had visited previously.

Shannon used the Discovery Center as a base of operations for exhibits and displays, and for sharing information on Upper Respiratory Disease Syndrome, predation by ravens, destruction of burrows and food by off-road vehicles and sheep, and drought.

While Shannon Ginn did not observe anyone trying to take a tortoise, she did intercede to prevent handling of wild tortoises in several cases. She also prevented several people from releasing captives or wild tortoises brought from other parts of the desert. For example, after the interpretive center was closed one evening in April, two women climbed the fence carrying a tortoise that they had illegally collected from a road about 10 miles away. They were intercepted by our Naturalist. Another family brought a tortoise from Palmdale, and Shannon persuaded them to return the tortoise to the site of collection. Overall, about twice as many people tried to release captives or wild tortoises brought from other areas in 1990 compared to 1989.

Shannon has prepared a draft report for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee:

"Observations and Activities of the Naturalist for the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, Kern County, California: 18 March to 2 June 1990." The final report, including the Committee's recommendations for the 1991 Naturalist and management of the interpretive center, will be ready for distribution in December and copies may be obtained by addressing the Secretary of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee at P.O. Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555.

Committee Seeks Naturalist for 1991 Spring Season at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is seeking one or more people for the position of Naturalist at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area during spring of 1991.

The Committee hopes to have one or more people present at the interpretive center of the Natural Area seven days per week between March 1 and June 1. The Committee would especially like to have two people present on weekends, during the Easter week and Memorial Day holidays. Individuals or couples with one or more of the following qualifications are sought:

- ◆ Knowledge of desert and desert animals
- ◆ Experience in leading tours or acting as docents for museums
- ◆ Ability to meet people and share information
- ◆ Possessing valid driver's license and an ability to drive and handle the Desert Tortoise Discovery Center

The Committee will provide the Naturalist(s) with training and the Naturalist(s) will work out of the Discovery Center, which will be located at the parking lot of the interpretive center. The Naturalist(s) will have a contract with the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.

Interested applicants should send resumes to Carol Panlaqui at P.O. Box 448, Inyokern, California 93527, or call (619)377-4258.

The Desert Tortoise and Upper Respiratory Tract Disease

By Elliott Jacobson D.V.M., Ph.D.
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32610

A disease characterized by a mild to severe nasal discharge has been seen for many years in captive tortoises in Europe, England, and the United States. Although a complete list of the number of species of tortoises known to develop this disease is unavailable, it would be fair to say that until proven otherwise, all species of tortoises should be considered susceptible. In England, this disease is commonly seen in Greek (Testudo graeca) and Herman's (T. hermanni) tortoises.¹

Attempts at demonstrating or incriminating a causal agent have been unsuccessful. Because of negative findings and the failure to incriminate a specific bacteria, a virus has been considered a possible cause of this disease.²

At Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, University of Florida, species of tortoises presented with nasal discharge include Greek tortoises, leopard tortoises (Geochelone pardalis), radiated tortoises (Geochelone radiata), Indian star tortoises (Geochelone elegans) and gopher tortoises (Gopherus polyphemus). This disease has also been commonly seen in captive desert tortoises (Xerobates agassizii).³ In studies conducted on captive desert tortoises a bacterial organism, Pasteurella testudinis, has been isolated and incriminated as a possible cause of this disease.⁴ However, P. testudinis, has also been isolated from healthy tortoises and the significance of this organism remains unknown.

¹Lawrence, K. and J.R. Needham. 1985. Rhinitis in long term Mediterranean tortoises (Testudo graeca and T. hermanni). Veterinary Record. 117:662-664.

²Jackson, O.F., and J.R. Needham. 1983. Rhinitis and virus antibody titers in chelonians. Journal of Small Animal Practice. 24:31-36.

³Snipes, K.P., E.L. Biberstein, and M.E. Fowler. 1980. A Pasteurella sp. associated with respiratory disease in captive desert tortoises. Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. 177:804-807.

⁴Snipes, K.P., and E.L. Biberstein. 1982. Pasteurella testudinis sp. nov.: a parasite of desert tortoises. International Journal of Systematic Bacteriology. 32:201-210.

Special Report

In 1988, desert tortoises at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA), Kern County, California were seen with clinical signs of illness similar to that of captive desert tortoises. Signs included a mucopurulent discharge from the nares, puffy eyelids, eyes recessed into the orbits, and dullness to the skin and scutes. Based upon these clinical signs, Upper Respiratory Disease Syndrome (URDS) was used to characterize this syndrome.

In surveys of the DTNA in 1989 and 1990 it became clear that many desert tortoises were ill with this disease and shells of many tortoises indicated that there was a major die-off. Other surveys indicated that free-ranging desert tortoises with URDS also were seen in other areas in the western Mojave Desert, around Las Vegas, Nevada, the Beaver Dam Slope of Utah/Arizona, and sporadically in low numbers in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona.

In May 1989, with a contract from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, we initiated studies on desert tortoises ill with URDS in an attempt to elucidate the responsible pathogens. In the course of these studies the pathology of this disease was better understood and findings indicated that the upper respiratory tract was the major site of involvement. Based on these findings the disease was found to be a chronic upper respiratory tract disease and the acronym URTD was used. Today, URTD more appropriately designates this illness and should replace URDS.

Microbiologic investigations with URTD failed to incriminate a virus as a potential causal agent. Pasteurella testudinis was isolated from most of the ill tortoises examined and a previously unidentified Mycoplasma was also isolated from ill tortoises. Electron microscopic studies confirmed the presence of Mycoplasma on the surface membranes of the upper respiratory tract of desert tortoises ill with URTD. Based upon what we know in birds and mammals, P. testudinis and Mycoplasma, either individually or in combination could be responsible for this disease.

Still, predisposing factors such as poor nutrition (resulting from habitat degradation), drought, and release of captive desert tortoises ill with URTD into the wild are more than likely involved. This whole issue of problems resulting from release of ill pet desert tortoises needs to be publicized because this practice should not continue. Until we know more, it is safe to assume that captive ill tortoises can transmit this disease to both captive and free-ranging clinically healthy tortoises.

TOUR GUIDES AND NATURALIST ASSISTANTS NEEDED

TOUR GUIDE TRAINING SEMINAR SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 16, 1991

Conditions on the Desert Tortoise Natural Area will not be ideal this spring with the effects of the prolonged drought and tortoise respiratory disease. However, plans are underway for a limited number of group tours and for a naturalist to be available. Resourceful volunteers are needed to help visitors learn about and enjoy the Natural Area.

A tour guide training seminar is scheduled on March 16, 1991. Desert specialists including Dr. Kristin Berry, Ph.D., Mr. Lloyd Brubaker and others will offer field and indoor sessions on the animals, plants, ecology and geology of the area. A notebook with printed reference materials will be provided for each guide.

If you can commit several days this spring to our interpretive program, either on weekdays or weekends, please plan to join us for this special seminar. For more information and to sign up please contact: Laura Stockton, (805)831-2325 or write 6201 Wible Rd., Bakersfield, CA 93313 or Bev Steveson, (805)832-9121.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL
LAURA STOCKTON AT (805)831-2325 OR BEV STEVESON AT (805)832-9121.**

Until recently, no antibiotics or combination of antibiotics have been efficacious for treating tortoises ill with URTD. Believing that Mycoplasma and Pasteurella may be the most important organisms in URTD, antibiotic therapy with a combination of 10 mg/kg of body weight doxycycline (UDL Laboratories, Inc., Rockford, Illinois), given orally once per day for 30 days and ceftiofur (Naxcel, Upjohn Co., Kalamazoo, Michigan), given as an intramuscular injection once per day for two weeks, was considered the therapy of choice.

Dr. Watter Rosskopf, a veterinarian in private practice in Los Angeles, California, has reported success with this combination (personal communication). An alternative antibiotic which also appears to be efficacious is injectable enrofloxacin (Baytril, Mobay Corp., Shawnee, Kansas) at 8 mg/kg once per day for 2 weeks. Dr. Rosskopf also uses a daily nasal flush consisting of a combination of: 49.5 cc saline; 0.25 cc of enrofloxacin, and 0.25 cc of tylosin (Elanco Co., Lilly Corp., Indianapolis, Indiana). A small quantity (up to 0.5 cc) of this combination can be flushed up both nares of the affected tortoise utilizing a syringe and attached catheter of appropriate diameter. This should be continued for several weeks (at least until the rhinitis has abated). It is important to maintain tortoises at an optimum environmental temperature during the course of treatment.

Results of clinical trials with these new drugs and drug combinations for treating tortoises ill with URTD are extremely promising for captive tortoises. Unfortunately the situation for ill free-ranging tortoises is not as promising. Since this disease more than likely is multifactorial, schemes for managing URTD in free-ranging populations are going to be difficult to develop and implement. Minimally tortoise hobbyists can make a major contribution by getting the word out that captive tortoises should not be released back into the wild. More than likely this practice has contributed to the spread of URTD in wild populations of desert tortoises.

Prepared for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Five Years of Stewardship

By Bev Steveson

Monitoring

In addition to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ranger surveillance, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee makes a complete inspection of the perimeter fence line and kiosk area of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA) at least twice a year and as required on special occasions. The complete inspection requires four people (two with a four-wheel drive vehicle) approximately 10 hours, for a total of 40 man-hours. Sites needing repair are flagged and recorded on a map. Tools and materials that will be needed (fencing, fence stretcher, posts, post pounder, signs, wire, wire cutters and clips) are noted.

The same level of yearly monitoring is expected to continue to be necessary.

Maintenance

Furthermore, the DTPC maintenance coordinator schedules a volunteer work party in cooperation with the BLM. These usually occur in March and October to prepare for times of heavy visitor use. Volunteers are contacted by BLM and by the DTPC newsletter and special postcards to past workers.

The volunteer maintenance crew, guided by the BLM Ranger (or other staff member) and the DTPC maintenance coordinator, work at least Saturday, and Sunday as necessary, on the work weekend.

As necessitated by the planned tasks, the volunteers are divided into small crews with each crew leader being given a map with designated maintenance sites. Past tasks have included: major and minor fence repairs; posting standard perimeter signs; posting of special signs (quarantine and non-release of pet tortoises); the removal of abandoned vehicles on the perimeter of the DTNA; cleaning, repair and painting of the outhouses; placement of the "gate" at the entrance during the quarantine period; and maintenance of the area around the kiosk including the self-guided

natural trails. The BLM provides most of the materials and tools. The DTPC and volunteers also supply some tools.

The need for the present level of maintenance is expected to continue.

Factors that may influence the level and type of maintenance include the increasing level of public use of the DTNA and the surrounding area and BLM plans for management of the desert tortoise under its current threatened status.

Photomonitoring

Every five years, the DTPC photographs the perimeter of the DTNA inside and outside of the fence line for specifically designated sites. Slides are taken at a height of 4 to 5 feet with a 35 mm, SLR camera with a 50 mm lens on a tripod. Either K64 or Fuji 100 film is used. Two photos are taken in each of the west, north, east and south directions at each designated site. Each set of slides is labeled and organized in archival, transparent slide sheets in a three-ring binder. One set remains with the DTPC and the other is sent to BLM, Ridgecrest Area Office. This requires nine rolls of 36 exposure film (plus processing); 16 archival slide holder sheets; 2 three-ring binders; and miscellaneous labelling. The approximate 1990 cost for these materials is \$180.00. Vehicles, gas, photography equipment and personal time are provided by DTPC volunteers.

Photomonitoring is also done at any time an environmental change or special event occurs in or around the DTNA. In the past this has included: exploratory drilling for minerals north of the DTNA; the Honda Test Track adjacent to the northwest corner of the DTNA; cases of vandalism; ORV activity; and publicity and historical photographs, such as the dedication of the kiosk, use of the Discovery Center, installing special signs, guided tours, and work parties.

The present level of photomonitoring will need to continue with the same variable factors listed under the Maintenance section being considered.

This a report for the Desert Tortoise Natural Area Stewardship Program.

Desert Tortoise Council to Host 16th Annual Symposium

To be held March 8-10, 1991

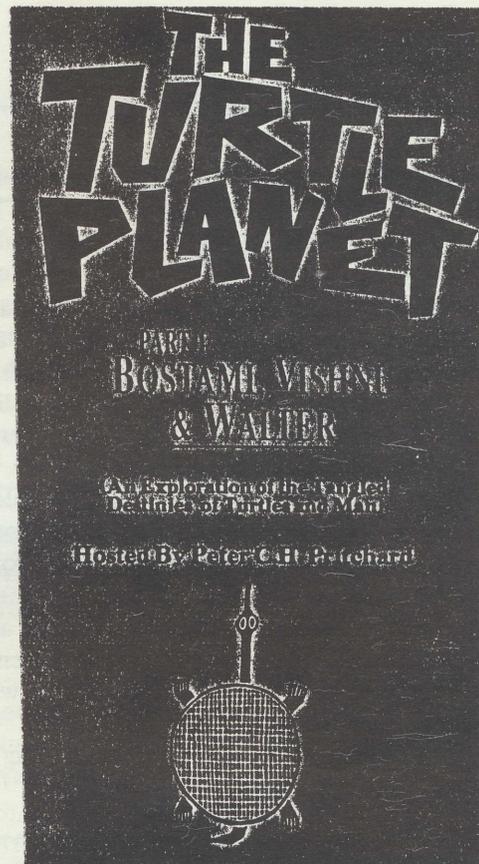
The Desert Tortoise Council is holding its 16th Annual Meeting and Symposium at the Palace Station in Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting begins at 1:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon, March 8th, and continues through Sunday afternoon, March 10th. Participants at the Symposium can sign up for a Bureau of Land Management-sponsored field trip to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center on Monday, March 11th. The Conservation Center is the focus of a \$2.5 million dollar research program on desert tortoises.

According to Symposium Chairman Dr. Kristin Berry, the program has a national and international flavor with a wide array of guest speakers and two special panels.

One special panel on captive breeding of endangered turtles and tortoises will feature John Behler, Curator of Reptiles for the New York Zoological Society and Dr. Jim Juvick of the University of Hawaii. They will present papers on successful captive breeding programs for endangered turtles and tortoises world-wide. Dr. Ulysses S. Seal will also offer contributions through his chairmanship of the Captive Breeding Specialist Group with the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

A second special panel on health and disease will have such participants as Dr. Elliott Jacobson of the University of Florida, Dr. Ken Nagy of UCLA and his students Brian Henen and Charles Peters, and Dr. Jim Klaassen of APL Veterinarian Laboratories. They will cover such topics as the latest research on upper respiratory tract disease, shell necrosis, and interpretations of health profiles of wild tortoises. Dr. Peter Pritchard, well-known internationally for his research on turtles and tortoises, will present the film Turtle Planet at the Saturday evening banquet.

The hour-long film is the first in a series



of films about turtles and tortoises produced by Walter Allen. Turtle Planet is a moving documentary of the relationships between human cultures and chelonians. Dr. Michael Klemens, who is program director for Turtle Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and fund-raiser for the IUCN's Freshwater and Turtle and Tortoise Group, will offer a paper on accomplishments of the Action Plan.

Registration forms may be obtained from Terrie Correll, Secretary for the Council, at: Desert Tortoise Council, P.O. Box 1738, Palm Desert, California 92261-1738. Registration costs are \$50.00 per person prior to February 8, 1991 and \$60.00 thereafter. Banquet costs are \$18.00 per person and room costs at the Palace Station are \$50.00 per night (plus tax) for single or double occupancy until February 8th. When calling the Palace Station (1-800-634-3101) for room reservations, be sure to mention the Desert Tortoise Council.

Council Symposium to Include Field Trip to Tortoise Conservation Center

Participants in this year's Desert Tortoise Council Symposium will have an opportunity to visit the recently established Tortoise Conservation Center located near Las Vegas, Nevada. A field trip to the Center is scheduled for Monday, March 11, the last day of the four-day conference.

The Tortoise Conservation Center is jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy. The facility is situated on a 640-acre BLM right of way in the Las Vegas Valley and will be the site of several desert tortoise research programs beginning this spring. Funding for facilities on the site (fencing, pens, irrigation, office/storage facilities) and for the major research projects totals approximately \$2.5 million and was generated through a mitigation settlement involving several major residential developments in the Las Vegas area. Beginning in June of 1990, tortoises whose habitat was to be taken by these developments were collected and relocated to the Center for the various research projects.

Tortoise Tracks

Tortoise Tracks is the quarterly newsletter of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of the desert tortoise.

Newsletter Staff

Jun Lee	Editor
Roger Dale	Assistant Editor
Carol Panlaqui	Production Manager
Bev Steveson	Photographer

All materials for publication in the Tortoise Tracks newsletter should be sent to Jun Lee, 434 West 22nd Street, San Pedro, CA 90731.

The collection/relocation process continued through fall 1990. In total, approximately 730 tortoises were relocated to the Center. A number of the collected tortoises showed signs of Upper Respiratory Disease Syndrome (URDS). Tortoises taken to the Center are initially being housed in quarantine pens (25 by 50 feet). Once quarantined, healthy tortoises will be placed into 10 to 40 acre research pens.

While BLM is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Center, both The Nature Conservancy and the Nevada Department of Wildlife are responsible for administering contracts for the on-site research projects which will commence early this spring. Four major research programs are to be funded through the development settlement including studies on tortoise reproduction, nutrition, and grazing, as well as a project which will seek to establish design guidelines for cost effective barriers to prevent tortoises from wandering onto highways and construction sites.

In addition to the four settlement-funded research projects, independent microhabitat research on tortoise burrows is being conducted by Charles Lowe, Ph.D. of the University of Arizona. This spring BLM will also begin administering experimental treatments to tortoises infected with URDS under the guidance of Elliott Jacobson D.V.M., Ph.D. of the University of Florida.

At present 222 acres of the 640-acre BLM property are fenced. Ultimately the Center may be expanded to encompass up to 10,000 acres, pending a land use plan currently under consideration by BLM.

The March 11 field trip to the Center presents an unique opportunity for Symposium attendees in that the facility is not normally open to the public. Eventually, BLM hopes to utilize Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) mitigation fees to construct an education center at the site. The education facility would be open to the public and used in conjunction with local school district programs.

Future editions of Tortoise Tracks will include updated reports on the various research projects occurring at the Tortoise Conservation Center.

Request for Volunteers

Hal Avery of the Bureau of Land Management, California District Office will be conducting a research project with Elliott Jacobson D.V.M., Ph.D. and Kristin Berry, Ph.D. on the effects of nutrition on the transmissibility of upper respiratory disease pathogens in the desert tortoise.

Research will start in early spring 1991. The project will be conducted at the Living Desert Museum in Palm Desert, California.

Volunteers are needed to assist in constructing tortoise enclosures for the project. Volunteers and their families will receive free passes to the Living Desert Museum. Please contact Terrie Correl, Curator, Living Desert Museum at (619)346-5694, if you are available to assist in pen construction during any weekend in February 1991.

A special note of appreciation for the thoughtful donors and members of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.

DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE, INC.
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