



Tortoise Tracks



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Winter 2011 31:4

Stewardship and good company at the DTPC Annual Fall Work Party!

Article by Mary Kotschwar

Pictures by Glen Baumbach, Bob Parker, and Steve & Marlene Ishii



Big thanks to all of our participants! Glen Baumbach, Mayra Gavidia, Chuck Hemingway, Chris Herbst, Steve and Marlene Ishii, Mary Kotschwar, David Logan, Charlie Massieon, Laura Mogg, Kara Neal, Sara Perry, Estela Polanco, Ana Ramos, Demond Stephens, and Dave Zantiny all pictured here. Jane McEwan, Pat Sorensen, and Bob Parker were already hard at work!

The Annual Fall Work Party was a great success, thanks to everyone who attended and helped support the event. On the morning of October 15, 2011, nineteen of us met up at the [DTRNA interpretive center](#) for introductions and a brief presentation about the area and the DTPC. From there, the group split into teams and got to work!



Laura and Marlene with a newly installed boundary sign

sections of damaged fence along the eastern and southern borders of the DTRNA. The last group, made up of DTPC Preserve Manager, **Mary Kotschwar**, retired BLM biologist, **Bob Parker**, **Dave Zantiny**, **David Logan**, and six students from [Lancaster High School](#) with their teacher **Glen Baumbach**,

headed to the Eastern Expansion Area to install No Trespass signs. Although the DTPC hopes to ultimately incorporate the Expansion Area properties into the DTRNA and open them to the public for hiking and wildlife watching, the signs are a necessary interim step to decrease habitat degradation caused by illegal riding, grazing, camping, and dumping.

Despite temperatures that climbed into the high 80's, the crews worked well into the afternoon and accomplished a lot. Collectively, we monitored 6 parcels of land in



Steve and Charlie remove redundant fencing in the northern section of the DTRNA



Jane and Pat - equipped with GPS, clipboard and map, headed out to monitor parcels

DTPC President, **Jane McEwan**, and volunteer **Pat Sorensen**, headed out along the Randsburg-Mojave Road to conduct annual monitoring of the DTPC-owned parcels just south of the DTRNA. They documented the general conditions of the sites, as well as any wildlife observations or evidence of anthropogenic disturbance. A team consisting of **Steve** and **Marlene Ishii**, **Laura Mogg**, and **Charlie Massieon** traveled to the northernmost sections of the DTRNA for boundary fence and sign maintenance, and to remove some redundant fencing from the DTRNA interior. A two-man group consisting of **Chris Herbst** and **Chuck Hemingway** repaired multiple

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Bob, Mary and Dave installing a sign.



two sections, repaired the boundary fence line of the DTRNA in 4 places, replaced or repainted 10 boundary signs, removed 150 yards of redundant fence and 22 posts (to be reused for future projects), installed 18 new signs in the eastern expansion area, and removed around 200 lbs of trash from the desert. We had a good time, too!

We are extremely grateful for the stewardship grant from [Tread Lightly!](#) to support this event. With these funds, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee was able to obtain some much needed tools and supplies for this and future stewardship projects, as well as an abundance of refreshments for our volunteers. Special thanks to DTPC Board member, Steve Ishii, for obtaining this grant and purchasing many of the supplies. Thanks also to **Carrie Woods** and **Eddie Duque** of the [BLM Ridgecrest Field Office](#) for coordinating the use of their sign installation equipment and to Bob Parker for transporting it.



Students from Lancaster High School A.P. Environmental Sciences class install signs in the Eastern Expansion Area

Funding Challenge

Jane McEwan, DTPC Board President

I've enjoyed returning to "Camp C," adjacent to the [Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area](#), over the past four years and noticing the signs of recovery since the area was fenced. My observations have been encouraging but are subjective. More scientific research is essential to inform and improve restoration strategies used on land the DTPC acquires. The mulch treatments and micro-catchments tried so far on Camp C were described in previous issues of *Tortoise Tracks*. Data collected from 2009 through 2011 suggest their potential and limitations. In 2011, working in partnership, **Heather Schneider, Ph.D.** of the [U.S. Geological Survey](#), and **Mary Kotschwar, M.S.**, of the DTPC, Inc. increased the number of sampled sites to improve the precision of estimates and statistical power to detect trends. Their findings from April 2011 were presented at the California Invasive Plant Council conference in October 2011. They propose to continue this research in 2012 to include experimental removal of invasive plants and investigate seed banks under different treated and untreated plots. However, the DTPC, Inc. needs to raise at least \$2,000 to fund this research. I will personally match up to \$500 in donations to the DTPC, Inc. to further this research. I'm confident other members and friends will match my challenge and exceed it. Since mitigation funds associated with past land acquisitions are very limited in comparison to the current costs of fencing and restoration, the proposed research will help enable the DTPC to make the most of the limited funds available.



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<http://www.tortoise-tracks.org>



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The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Founded 1974

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Notes from the Air!

Article by Steve Ishii
Pictures by Marlene and Steve Ishii

On Saturday 11/26/11, DTPC volunteers **Marlene** and **Steve Ishii** took to the air to survey and monitor lands owned by the DTPC. The flight was generously provided by **LightHawk**, a group that donates flights to conservation groups in North America and Central America via a large network of volunteer pilots.

The aerial support provided by LightHawk facilitated the surveying and monitoring of over 60 square miles of DTPC lands and surrounding areas in the California City and Fremont-Kramer area. With much of this land located in rugged terrain, accessible only on foot, taking to the air is an effective means of accomplishing surveying and monitoring goals. The photos captured will serve as a data point in the group's ongoing stewardship efforts. No grazing was observed during the flight. However, trespassing was observed in the Eastern Expansion Area, further reinforcing the need for additional signage and fencing in this area. For additional pictures, please see our photo album on Facebook (<http://www.Facebook.com/DTPC.inc>).

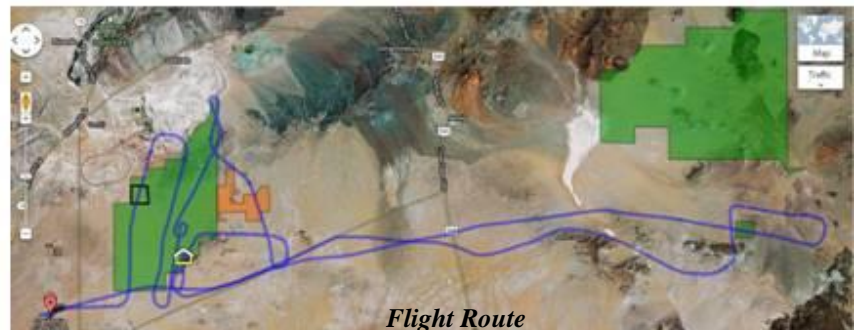
Special **"Thank You"** to LightHawk Program Manager, **Christine Steele**, for her patience and guidance throughout the flight planning and scheduling process and LightHawk Volunteer Pilot, **Jo Duffy**, for donation of flight time, usage of her plane, fuel and her persistence with obtaining airspace restriction clearance!

Looking east across the DTRNA from the Interpretive Center.

LightHawk pilot, Jo Duffy with her Cessna 172.

Jo preparing for takeoff.

Marlene boarding the plane.



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee

Invites You to Join Us At Our

37th Annual Banquet and General Meeting

January 28, 2012

The DTPC's Annual Meeting and Banquet will be held Saturday, January 28, 2012 at The Palmdale Hotel, 300 W. Palmdale Blvd., Palmdale, California 93551 (661-273-1200). The afternoon Annual Meeting will feature a review of the Committee's ongoing programs and activities and plans for 2012. Speakers from a variety of agencies will give updates on important activities throughout southern California. This year the DTPC will feature two presentations at the banquet:

- "Solving Mysteries to Name the New Desert Tortoise"
Presented by Dr. Kristin H. Berry
- "Observations of the Elusive Mohave Ground Squirrel at the DTRNA"
Presented by Freya Reder and Mary Kotschwar

PROGRAM

- Annual Meeting 2:00 to 5:00 P.M.
- Social Mixer 5:00 to 6:00 P.M.
- Banquet Event 6:00 to 9:00 P.M.

To RSVP or For Additional Information Contact:

Mary Kotschwar (951) 683-3872 or Email: dtpc@pacbell.net

\$ _____ Dinner Reservation **\$35.00**
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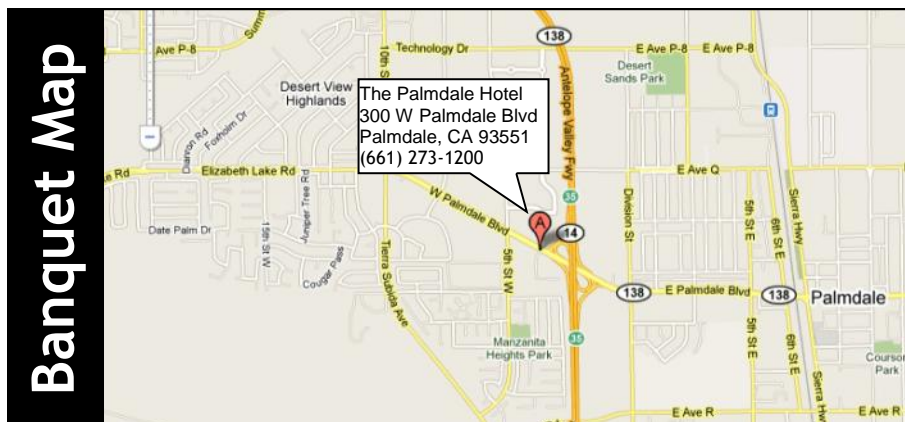
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37th Annual Banquet Guest Speakers

Solving Mysteries to Name the New Desert Tortoise

Presented By: Dr. Kristin Berry

Dr. Kristin Berry shares the results of a multi-year research project to name and describe the new desert tortoise, Morafka's desert tortoise *Gopherus morafkai*. Formerly, the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) as we used to know it, was described as having a geographic range that extended from California, Nevada, and Utah in the United States south into the states of Sonora and Sinaloa, Mexico. We now know that the desert tortoise is not one species but a species complex composed of at least two and probably three or more species. Agassiz's desert tortoise occurs in the north, north and west of the Colorado River in California, Nevada, Utah, and the northwestern corner of Arizona. The newly described Morafka's desert tortoise is found south and east of the Colorado River in Arizona and Mexico, primarily in the Sonoran Desert. A third species, in the southern part of range is currently under study by **Taylor Edwards**, a graduate student at the University of Arizona. The result is that the desert tortoise, as we used to know it in California, now has one-third of its former geographic range. Dr. Berry will take us through the numerous historic, genetic and other mysteries, to determine which species should receive a new name. The species-split was published in ZooKeys in June 2011, and was co-authored by **Robert Murphy**, Dr. Kristin Berry, Taylor Edwards, **Alan Leviton**, **Amy Lathrop**, and **J. Daren Riedle**.

To read the entire article "The dazed and confused identity of Agassiz's land tortoise, *Gopherus agassizii* (Testudines, Testudinidae) with the description of a new species, and its consequences for conservation," visit: <http://www.pensoft.net/journals/zookeys/article/1353/the-dazed-and-confused-identity-of-agassiz>

Observations of the Elusive Mohave Ground Squirrel at the DTRNA

Presented By: Freya Reder and Mary Kotschwar

Freya Reder will share her experiences and photographs from the Committee's efforts to document and observe the elusive Mohave ground squirrel at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area in 2011. **Mary Kotschwar** will provide a brief introduction to the species' ecology and the context of these observations in a broader research program.

DTPC Calendar of Events

January 28, 2012: DTPC Annual Meeting and Banquet, Palmdale Hotel, Palmdale, CA

February 17-19, 2012: The 37th Annual Symposium of the Desert Tortoise Council will be held at Sam's Town in Las Vegas, Nevada. Visit DTC's website www.deserttortoise.org for registration information and details for this event.

March 2012: DTPC's Spring Work Party will be announced soon.

April 2012: Spring Wild Flower Walk. Dr. Kristin H. Berry will lead a field trip identifying the beautiful spring flowers at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. Details coming soon.

More information for each event can be found by calling (951) 683-3872 or sending an email to dtpc@pacbell.net. Additional information can be found on the DTPC's website www.tortoise-tracks.org and Facebook www.facebook.com/dtpc.inc.

Photo by Freya Reder

DTPC Wall of Fame

As the year comes to an end and we reflect on the accomplishments of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, we also reflect on the generosity and support of our members, who make these accomplishments possible. Special thanks to the following individuals for their invaluable contributions this past year:

Dr. Kristin Berry
 Dr. Noël Dybdal
 Cynthia & Bruce Gaya
 Dr. Helen Hammer
 Steve & Marlene Ishii
 Dr. Richard Kettler
 Arthur Lillund
 Aurora Larson
 Guy McInerny
 Mary Sweet
 Martin & Nancy Thomas

A special gift of \$5,000 came from the Estate of Richards K. Farnham. Mr. Farnham was an active member of the DTPC for many years and a dedicated teacher. Per the request of his son, Paul Farnham, the donation will be used for educational outreach programs.

Special thanks to the following:

Dr. Kristin Berry
 Jane McEwan
 Steve & Marlene Ishii
 Dave Zantiny
 Chris Herbst
 Chuck Hemingway
 Jun Lee
 Charlie Massieon
 Laura Mogg
 Freya Reder
 Pat Sorensen
 Mary Shepherd
 Inga Swearingen
 Shelley Ellis, BLM
 Carrie Woods, BLM
 Eddie Duque, BLM
 Bob Parker
 David Logan
 Glen Baumbach
 Lancaster High School
 Ann Evans, Tread Lightly!
 Christine Steele, LightHawk
 Jo Duffy, LightHawk



Tortoise at home in Indian Wells Valley

Generous Car Donation to the DTPC

Article by Laura Stockton

Founding member of the Desert Tortoise Committee, **Warren Forgey**, recently donated his 2008 KIA Rondo to the Committee. Warren and his late wife, **Betty**, were members of the DTPC Board of Trustees for 17 years beginning in 1973. He regularly participated in DTRNA onsite work. Some of his contributions included participating in the development the Interpretive Center, spring and fall work parties, photo monitoring, patrolling the boundary fence and field trips. Assisting with the development of the photo monitoring protocols and accessing the remote areas of the DTRNA on foot for those photos were some of the most interesting projects for Warren. Betty and Warren were active participants in the first 30 DTPC Annual Meetings, even after they retired from the Board of Trustees.

Warren has lived in Boron since he was in his mid-teens. He retired from working at the Edwards Airforce Base rocket testing facility. His lifelong love of the desert and interest in desert habitat conservation is evidenced in his ongoing support of the DTPC. This generous gift reflects his commitment to DTPC work and is greatly appreciated. Although not useable for off-highway use on preserve lands, the KIA will be a great utility vehicle for highway use.



Elden Hughes dies at 80; longtime Sierra Club leader

Elden Hughes, a lifelong environmental advocate, helped spearhead efforts to protect the California wilderness, including his beloved Mojave Desert.

Article by Louis Sahagun, [Los Angeles Times](#)

CALIFORNIA (December 4, 2011) - Elden Hughes, a crusader for wild places and a leader of the Sierra Club's battles to protect desert wilderness from development and abuse, has died. He was 80.

Hughes, who died of prostate cancer early Sunday at his home in Joshua Tree, Calif., was a visionary and inspirational figure who mentored generations of activists in fights to reduce the environmental damage of developments, including renewable energy projects on pristine landscapes and wildlife.

Hughes was among a dozen environmentalists invited to the White House in 1994 when President Clinton signed the landmark California Desert Protection Act, which created a new national park in the eastern Mojave Desert and elevated Death Valley and Joshua Tree from national monument to national park status.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), author of the final version of the protection act, said, "Hughes dedicated his life to the protection and revival of our great Mojave Desert and its tortoises. I'll never forget when he brought a couple of tortoises to a large constituent breakfast and the amazed and glowing

faces of youngsters when he told them they live for decades. Elden led a huge citizen effort in 1993 to support my Desert Protection Act. We will pass the second Desert Protection Act, now pending in committee, in his honor. He will be greatly missed."

Sahagun, Louis. "Elden Hughes dies at 80; longtime Sierra Club leader." [Los Angeles Times on the Web](#) 4 Dec. 2011. 5 Dec. 2011 <<http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-elden-hughes-20111205.0.1306208.story>>



Photo by Alex Koester, For The Times / November 3, 1994

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The DTPC is an IRS recognized tax-exempt 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation (tax ID 23-7413415). All contributions above the basic \$15 annual membership dues are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

All contributors receive the quarterly newsletter *Tortoise Tracks*.

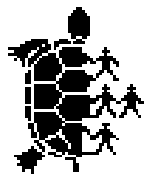
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For more information on becoming a DTPC member, you can also contact us at (951) 683-3872 or visit our website at: <http://www.tortoise-tracks.org/dtpc/member.html>



Tortoise Tracks

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Contact your human resources department to find out about your company's workplace giving program. To find out how your employer can host its own campaign, go to EarthShare's web site at: www.earthshare.org
The DTPC participates in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC # 71985)