



Tortoise Tracks



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Spring 2017 37:1

42nd Annual Meeting & Banquet



EVENTS

- by **Jill Estrada**

On January 28, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee held its 42nd annual meeting and banquet. The meeting began with an introduction by DTPC president, Ron Berger, who discussed the purpose of the DTPC and recognized the beneficial partnership we have with 8minutenergy Renewables, a solar company that has helped the DTPC acquire and restore more land and perform biological surveys. Ron then introduced **Kevin Brokish** and **Rebecca Kelly** of 8minutenergy Renewables, who presented a brief overview of their company and of the Springbok I & II solar farms that are located west of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. **Jun Lee**, land acquisition manager for DTPC discussed some of the great work that has been done due to the partnership between the DTPC and 8minutenergy. **Carrie Woods**, Biologist at BLM-Ridgecrest and **Robert Pawelek**, BLM- Ridgecrest resources branch chief, then gave an overview of some of the activities BLM has performed in relation to the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area and tortoise

habitat. **Beth Ramsel**, the new district manager of BLM-desert district also introduced herself and expressed her excitement about working with us in the future. DTPC preserve manager and conservation coordinator, **Jill Estrada** gave an overview of all 2016 accomplishments and upcoming events in 2017, followed by **Laura Stockton** who presented the treasurer's report. At the end of the meeting, DTPC members voted to re-elect Dr. Kristin Berry and Greg Lathrop to serve on the board of directors for three more years.

After a social mixer which allowed everyone to meet and greet friends and new acquaintances, the



banquet proceeded with the recognition of former board member, Freya Reder, who just finished up working as biological monitor for the

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restoration project. Freya worked as our naturalist during the 2011 season and served on the DTPC board since 2014. We thank her for everything she did and continues to do to better the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.

After a delicious meal, Larry Lepré gave an amazing presentation about desert birds and problems caused by ravens. Banquet attendees then enjoyed a lively raffle in which winners were able to take home a variety of generously donated items.

We would like to give a special thank you to **Bonny Ahern** and **Craig Bansmer** for their help setting up the banquet room and running things throughout the night. Also, a thank you to **Joe Probst** for helping during the raffle drawing. Lastly, a special thank you to those who donated raffle items. If you have or know of any items that can be used at next year's meeting, please let us know.

If you were unable to attend the event, you may view videos of the annual meeting and Larry's presentation on our website under "What's New".

Desert Tortoise Council Symposium

Every year, the DTPC board and its preserve manager attend the Desert Tortoise Council Symposium in Las Vegas, NV. Researchers and conservation practitioners from throughout North America attend this important event each year to present newly published research and ideas about how to protect tortoise habitat and their wildlife neighbors. This year, important topics that were discussed included Renewable energy development and tortoise translocations, deer in the arid Southwest, the evolution of *Gopherus* tortoise species, and tortoise conservation efforts. The DTPC gave a presentation about the recent restoration project in the eastern expansion area and the importance of partnerships between renewable energy companies and conservation organizations. Larry LaPré presented an update on the Coalition for a Balanced Environment's efforts to manage raven populations in the desert. Each session offered updates, obstacles, and hope for tortoise conservation. We look forward to next year's event to learn more about the progress being made by our colleagues.



2017 Naturalist Season

Spring is on its way, and with it will come the wildflowers. The 2017 naturalist season will begin on Monday, March 13 and will conclude on Sunday, June 4. Due to the large amount of rain the area received over the winter, this spring should be a particularly beautiful time to see wildflowers and hopefully, tortoises! Both Sharon Schafer and Lisa LeVelle, our naturalists from the 2016 season, will return to welcome and educate visitors about the wonders of the Mojave desert. Please stop by to enjoy the tranquility of the DTRNA and to say hi to Sharon and Lisa. If you are planning to visit with a large group and hope to receive a tour, please notify us beforehand.

As a neighbor of California City, the DTPC recognizes the potential we have for outreach and education in the community. On March 25 from 11am to 3pm, we will be hosting a welcome event at the DTRNA interpretive center to encourage local visitors to the DTRNA and kick off the naturalist season. Please join us for snacks, information about tortoises and their desert habitat, and tours of the natural area.



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The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Founded 1974

Board of Directors

President	Ron Berger
Vice President	Bob Wood
Treasurer	Laura Stockton
Recording Secretary	Rachel Woodard
Board Member	Kristin Berry, Ph.D.
Board Member	Greg Lathrop
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LAND MANAGEMENT

A Successful start to the restoration project

Since late October, several restoration activities have been underway at the DTRNA expansion areas. As was reported in the last two tortoise tracks, trail camouflage, weed abatement, and trash removal has been completed since November. Since then, fencing has continued to progress and was completed during the first week of February. In total, close to 71,000 linear feet, or 13 miles, of fencing was installed, including ten access gates. The next step in this restoration project is to continue to remove non-native plants and trash while allowing native plants to restore themselves. As native vegetation makes a come back, more wildlife will thrive. As an active restoration area, this land will not be open to the public. Restoration is a lengthy process and requires many years without disturbance to return to a more natural state.



THE DTPC INVITES PUBLIC COMMENTS ON OHV GRANT APPLICATION

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) invites public comments on its preliminary grant application to the California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division. The DTPC is requesting funding to support two restoration projects in the Western and Southern expansion areas of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. The purpose of the Restoration Grants Program, as defined by the OHMVR Division, is to provide Ecological Restoration or Repair to habitat damaged by authorized or unauthorized OHV use. The DTPC seeks restoration funds to prevent continued habitat degradation related to unauthorized OHV activity on approximately 930 acres of conservation lands and to begin the restoration process on disturbed areas by installing protective fencing. The DTPC will provide some matching dollars to the project. If funded, the DTPC will install wildlife-friendly fencing around areas of contiguous conservation lands, followed by trash removal and control of invasive plant infestations. Where fencing is not feasible, unauthorized routes will be camouflaged to discourage unauthorized use.

The DTPC would appreciate your comments on these projects. You can review the grant applications, along with those from other agencies, local governments, and non-profits, on-line at www.ohv.parks.ca.gov. The public comment period is open from Tuesday, March 7, 2017 to Monday, April 3, 2017. Comments should be sent directly to the OHMVR Division at ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov and to the DTPC at dtpc@pacbell.net. Late comments will be forwarded to the division separately. Final grant applications are due May 1, 2017. For more information about the proposed restoration project, a public meeting will be held at the DTPC office in Riverside to provide an overview of both projects. Please contact the DTPC office at (951) 683 - 3872 or dtpc@pacbell.net for additional information.

One man's trash is not the desert's treasure

Every year while monitoring our land, our staff, contractors, and volunteers remove loads of trash from the desert. Items are as odd as car frames and mattresses or as obscure as pieces of plastic. Two items that are consistently found in the desert are mylar balloons and aluminum cans. As innocent as they might seem, both balloons and cans are highly reflective, which can be mistaken by some animals as food, especially when balloons begin to break apart. Many people unknowingly release birthday and graduation balloons which are blown out of sight, only to land miles away and get caught in vegetation. While traveling through the desert, many animals can become entangled in balloon strings or within the balloons themselves. Aluminum cans can act as temporary habitats to small animals. One problem with this in the desert is that although it is easy for animals to crawl into the can, it is not as easy for them to escape. During the hot months, the sun heats up the can, essentially turning it into an oven. While out monitoring last year, we found several aluminum cans that had been used as a temporary habitat by Darkling beetles and small lizards. Unfortunately, the animals were charred, suggesting that they had been baked inside the cans. When you visit the desert, please do your part by taking back any items you bring with you. All of us can do simple things to help protect the desert and its inhabitants.



OUTREACH

A special thank you to the John Gorbach estate

On the eve of December 23, we received a check for \$261,444.65 from the estate of John Gorbach. This wonderful surprise was in addition to \$35,000 that we received last October from the same estate. John Gorbach was a resident of Florida who was never a member of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. Little is known about him or why he generously chose our organization as a beneficiary in his will, however it is known that he was a revered snook fisherman and a supporter of several conservation organizations including the Gopher Tortoise Council. Mr. Gorbach's donation will become a legacy by contributing to our endowment fund which will continue to fund the organization's activities, and by directly funding current activities such as land acquisition and fence maintenance.

If you would like to learn more about creating your own legacy within the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, please contact us at (951) 683-3872 or by email at dtpc@pacbell.net

Order a DTRNA t-shirt!

To celebrate the beginning of the Naturalist season, we have launched a new campaign on bonfire.com, specifically for the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. Choose from 5 different styles and 5 different colors. Purchase yours at www.bonfire.com/dtrna

This campaign will only last for 10 days. Afterwards, a limited number of shirts can be purchased at the DTRNA.



A lot of the land management we do could not be done without our dedicated volunteers. Tasks such as trash removal, fence surveying and repair, weed control, land monitoring, and outreach event attendance help us manage our land and gain more support. Here are a few upcoming opportunities that are in need of volunteers.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities:

March 18: Spring Work Party

A large group of volunteers is needed for one of our biggest stewardship events of the year. The work party will take place in the Eastern Expansion Area and will focus on installing boundary signs on the newly installed fence line. This is critical to dissuading the public to trespass onto our land. If you are willing and able to help install signs prior to the work party, please let us know.

March - May: Land Monitoring

For those who participated in the monitoring training during the Fall work party, here is your chance to use those skills! Spring is our monitoring season, and we will need help getting to all of our parcels of land. Please contact us with your availability.

April 29: Desert Tortoise Days

One to two people are needed to help represent the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee during California City's annual Desert Tortoise Days. This would consist of speaking to the public about our organization and inviting them to visit the DTRNA.

If you are interested in volunteering your time for any of these events, please email us at dtpc@pacbell.net

DTPC Calendar of Events & Volunteer Opportunities

- **March 7, 2017: Start of public review period for OHV grant cycle**
- **March 13, 2017: Start of Naturalist Program (*Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area*)**
- **March 18, 2017: Spring Work Party (*Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area*)**
- **March 25, 2017: Naturalist Welcome Party (*Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area*)**
- **April 22, 2017: DTPC Board Meeting**
- **April 29, 2017: Desert Tortoise Days (*California City, CA*)**

The DTPC would like to thank the following people for their help with the annual meeting and banquet:

**Bonny Ahern
Craig Bansmer
Ron & Carol Berger
Kristin Berry
Kevin Brokish**

**Jill Estrada
Rebecca Kelly
Larry LaPré
Jun Lee
Carla Montagno**

**Robert Pawelek
Joe Probst
Beth Ramsel
Laura Stockton
Carrie Woods**

DTPC MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION FORM

1. YES, I want to help save the threatened desert tortoise and its habitat! Here is my tax-deductible membership contribution of:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Benefactor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patron/Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Life Membership |

2. My membership is current but here is an additional donation of \$ _____.
Please use it for:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Acquisition | <input type="checkbox"/> Where Most Needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

3. I'd like to help you grow the DTPC endowment. Please accept an additional donation of:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketable Securities (Stock): Contact DTPC Finance Committee Chairperson, Greg Lathrop at 2redgrey@gmail.com or (415) 637-7187 for instruction | |

Let's get the endowment started!

- I would like my contribution to remain anonymous
 I would like to receive Tortoise Tracks electronically (please provide email address)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Please make your check payable to DTPC and mail to:

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee
4067 Mission Inn Ave.
Riverside, CA 92501.

Thank you.

*All contributors receive the Tortoise Tracks newsletter. The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is an IRS recognized tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. All contributions and/or annual membership dues are fully tax-deductible. Contributor information is kept confidential and is not disclosed to third parties.

If you would like to renew your membership or donate online, please visit * www.tortoise-tracks.org *



Tortoise Tracks

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If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, notify us
by email at DTPC@tortoise-tracks.org

**When visiting the desert, always remember to
check under your vehicle for wildlife.**

