

2018: Annual Report of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.



Our Mission



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is dedicated to the recovery and conservation of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and other rare and endangered species inhabiting the Mojave and western Sonoran deserts.

Who we are

Our organization is composed of our **8 volunteer** Board of Directors, **one** Preserve Manager, **one** Director of Land Acquisition, **391** dedicated members and **many** wonderful volunteers.

Board of Directors: Our dedicated volunteer Board of Directors includes biologists, entrepreneurs, geographers, and educators including two founding members of the DTPC.



- Ron Berger, President
- Robert Wood, Vice President
- Rachel Woodard, Recording Secretary
- Laura Stockton, Treasurer
- Dr. Kristin Berry, Board Member
- Greg Lathrop, Board Member
- Larry Nelson, Board Member
- Dave Zantiny, Board Member

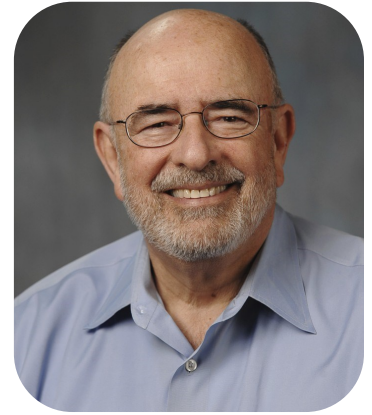
Preserve Manager & Conservation Coordinator: Our Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator is responsible for organizational operations including land management, research, outreach, and donor relations.

- Dr. Brittany Slabach (2019- Present)

Director of Land Acquisition: Our Director of Land Acquisition is responsible for working to acquire critical habitat, land donations, legal agreements and documentation.

- Jun Lee (1988 - Present)

A letter from our President



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee was founded in 1974 to:

- a) promote the welfare of the California State Reptile, the Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in its native wild state;
- b) establish and/or assist in the establishment of preserves for the Desert Tortoise in locations where there are habitats and ecosystems which support it;
- c) provide information, education and research regarding ecosystems critical to the Desert Tortoise and to associated animal and plant species that may occur in these ecosystems, including but not limited to conservation of the Mohave Ground Squirrel, Burrowing Owl, Barstow Woolly Sunflower and desert wash and streambed habitats;
- d) develop and implement management programs for preserves, to protect the Desert Tortoise and the biodiversity of the ecosystems in which it lives;
- e) foster and publicize the uses for these preserves for selected forms of recreation, education, conservation and research.

Supporting that mission, we have developed a set of objectives. These are:

- 1) Keep the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA) and other DTPC properties pristine and managed to promote recovery of the Desert Tortoise and other sensitive plant and animal species.
- 2) Expand the DTRNA and other DTPC conservation properties.
- 3) Strive to obtain unencumbered deeds and all resource rights and protections possible for all future DTPC property acquisitions.
- 4) Build an unrestricted endowment and cash/contribution flow to finance DTPC activities.
- 5) Reduce raven predation at the DTRNA and other DTPC conservation properties.
- 6) Increase the size, skills and diversity of the DTPC membership and volunteer pool.
- 7) Increase the use of the DTRNA for biological and natural resource management research projects.

Although we are a relatively small organization, we are convinced that our narrowly focused approach yields outsized results. A thorough analysis of those results can, in our view, best be assessed by first looking at what we've accomplished in the forty six years since we were organized. During those years, we purchased or otherwise acquired 7,700 acres in over 300 transactions, resulting in the creation and expansion of the DTRNA, believed to be the largest, safest preserve dedicated to the protection of the desert tortoise, Desert Kit Fox, American Badger, Mojave Ground Squirrel, Burrowing Owl, the Barstow Woolly Sunflower and more.

The DTRNA contains an incredibly rich and diverse number of species, including nearly 200 species of flowering plants that support 27 species of reptiles, 23 species of mammals, 29 species of breeding birds. The DTRNA has served as the site of over 100 research studies, resulting in numerous important findings.

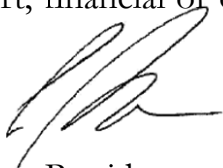
In addition, in conjunction with BLM, we developed and built an interpretive kiosk at the DTRNA, staffed DTRNA with a naturalist each season since 1989, and saw and helped educate more than 10,000 individuals from over 50 countries. In addition to expanding the DTRNA, we've acquired over 300 parcels totaling close to 8,000 acres, throughout Kern, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

With the exception of our Preserve Manager, Naturalist and Land Acquisition Director, all of the work that we do is accomplished by volunteers. Our board is comprised entirely of unpaid volunteers, which annually contribute close to 2,000 hours of service to our cause. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, who have monitored hundreds of parcels, tens of thousands of pounds of trash and invasive plant species have been removed over the years.

Naturally, our efforts are primarily focused on improving the health, welfare, and viability of the desert tortoise. Doing so requires us to assess and deal as best we can with the myriad threats facing the tortoise, from climate change to invasive plants, to the exploding population of ravens, to all sort of human development, to grazing of sheep and cattle, and the off-road OHV vehicles killing tortoises, destroying their burrows and degrading their habitat. In recent years, we have fenced over 24 miles of prime tortoise habitat; have dramatically expanded the DTRNA to acquire and protect areas tortoises might find more hospitable as climate changes and have acquired and protected other properties as well.

We took the initiative to create the Coalition for a Balanced Environment (CBE), which today numbers 20 coalition members including The Nature Conservancy, The Living Desert, Defenders of Wildlife, Transition Habitat Conservancy, and The Tortoise Conservancy. The CBE's focus is on reducing the raven population in the desert. Politically, we've filed numerous comments, concerns, and objections to all manner of ill-conceived roads, mining, cell tower and other projects which would lead to a less conducive environment for the tortoise. We've visited with Senators, Representatives, Mayors, City Councils and agencies such as BLM, USF&WS, and Cal. Fish & Wildlife. We've been interviewed many times, and we've written and contributed to numerous articles, videos, and books, many of which appeared nationally.

We could go on and on, but we hope you recognize that our work is, in fact, never done. We can never have enough volunteers, or enough capital, or enough hours in the day. So, we thank you for reading these words, for thinking about these subjects, and for whatever contributions of time, effort, financial or other support you have provided in the past or can provide in the years ahead.



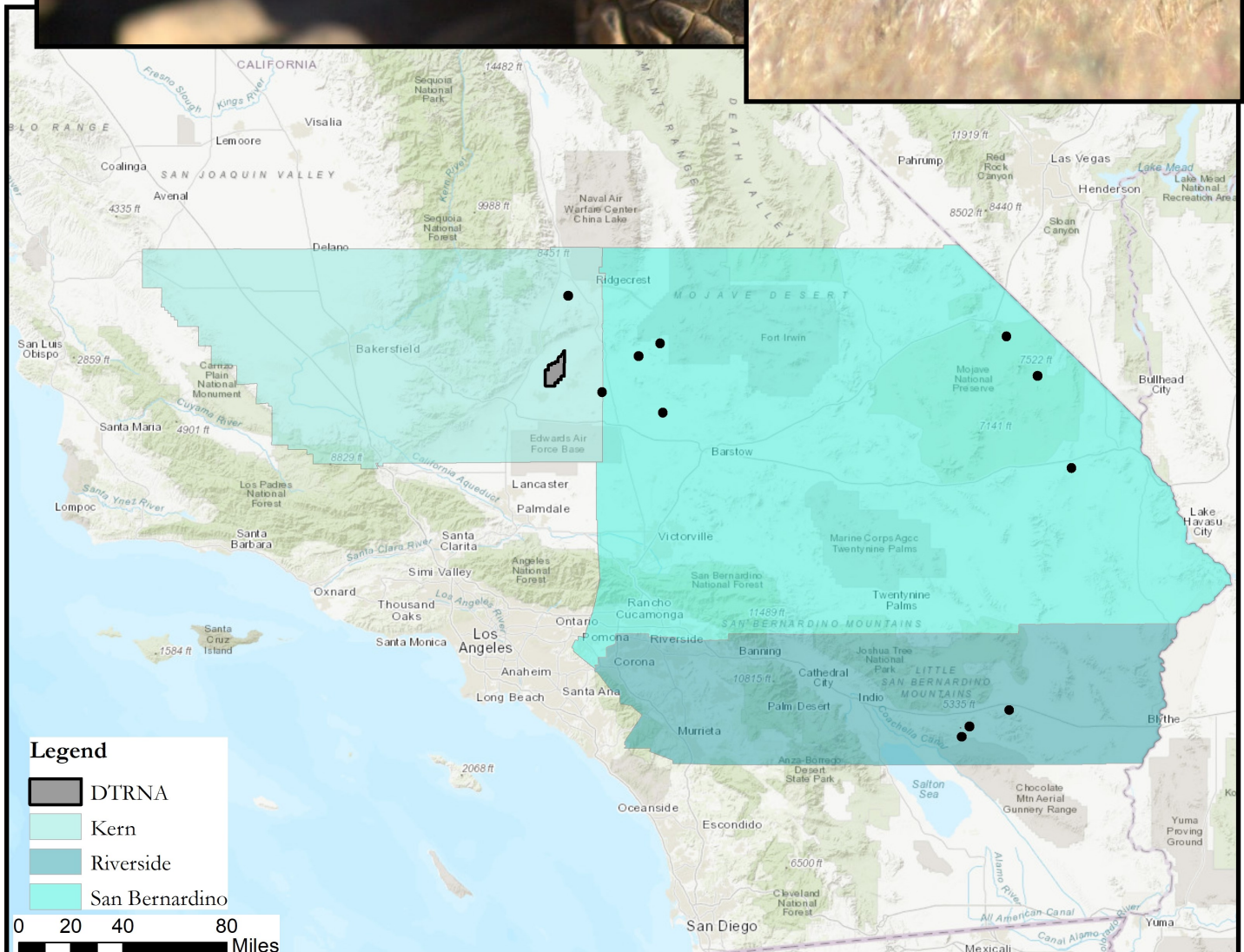
Ron Berger, President

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee

Where we work

We work to conserve lands in Kern, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. We manage a total of 32,416 acres for desert tortoises, Mohave ground squirrels, and other species of concern.

Photographs by Freya Reder and Sharon Schafer.

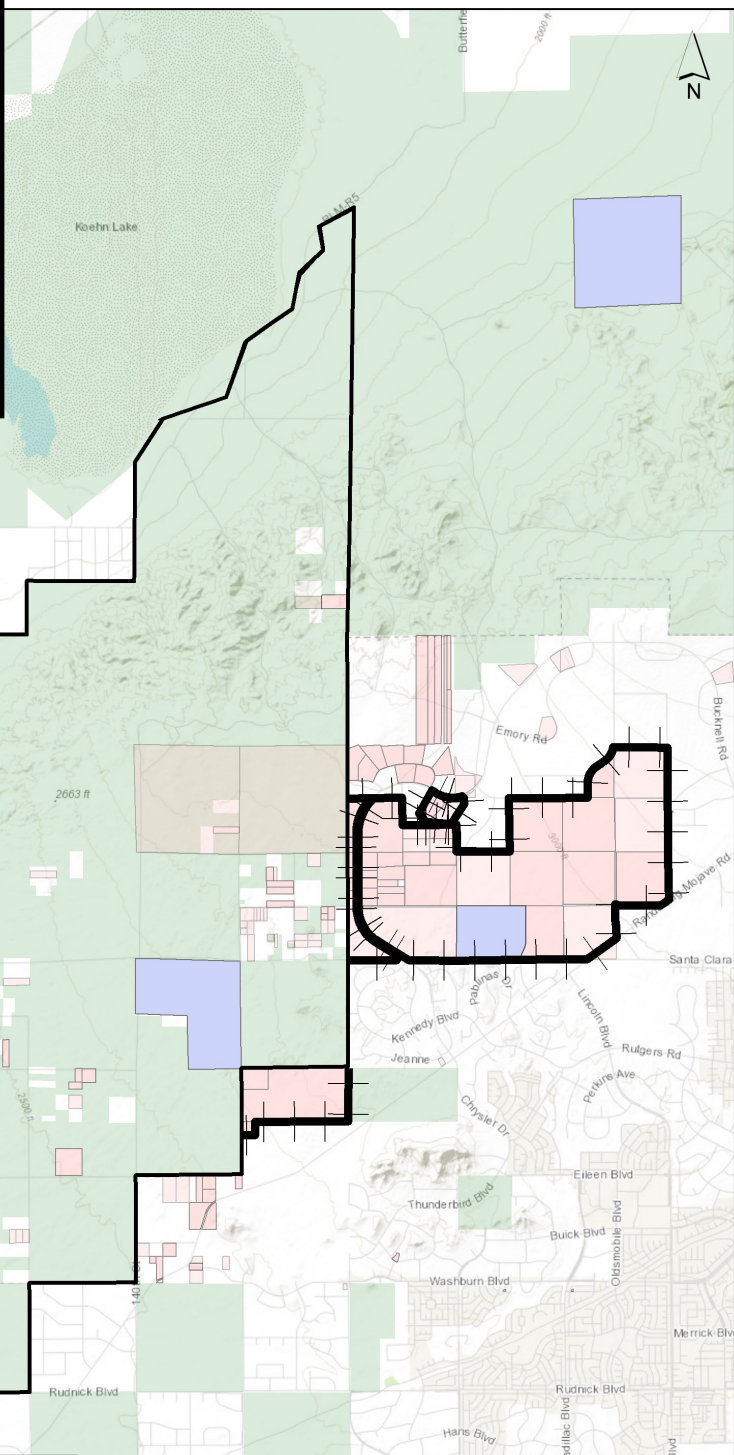


Land Management & Stewardship

We continued our land management efforts by monitoring all properties for incursions, installing additional fencing and conducting restoration work. In 2018, we installed an additional **seven miles** of fencing and conducted restoration work to continue camouflaging off-high way vehicle trails and restore denuded habitat. Fencing projects occurred in both the western and southern expansion areas, and protected an additional **640 acres** of land in the western expansion area and **320 acres** in our southern expansion areas. An American Conservation Experience (ACE) crew assisted with the restoration efforts through trail camouflage and trash pick up. We are extremely grateful for all their hard work and to our funding agencies - California State Parks OHV program and the California Wildlife Conservation Board - for making these projects happen!



Pictured above: Before (left) and after (right) pictures of off highway vehicle trails that were camouflaged by the ACE crew. **Picture opposite page:** The Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area with Bureau of Land Management Properties (green), California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (purple), and DTPC properties (pink). All fencing as of the end of 2018 is depicted by the thick black lines.



Land Management & Stewardship cont'd.

We held our annual spring work party on March 17 and our fall work party and National Public Lands Day event, held in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management, on September 29. During these events we continued restoration and stewardship activities. We had 46 volunteers who traveled over 8,000 miles to assist with fence monitoring, invasive species removal, and other habitat work. Volunteers worked in both the Western and Eastern Expansion Areas. During the spring work party, volunteers removed enough invasive species to fill a 40-yard dumpster full (pictured right)! We are so thankful for the continued efforts by our dedicated members and volunteers for their hard work during these events, and for our continued partnership with the Bureau of Land Management.



Community Outreach



This year we hosted tables at both California City Tortoise Days (California City, CA) and the Wildlife Conservation Exposition (San Francisco, CA). These events are wonderful ways to educate members of the public about desert tortoise conservation, the DTPC mission and work, and network with other non-profit organizations. Our table (pictured left) at the California City Tortoise Days provided educational materials regarding

tortoise biology, conservation, and areas of concern including the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. The Wildlife Conservation Exposition brings together conservation organizations from all over the world to network and bring their mission to the public.

Naturalist Season

We had another successful naturalist season with full time naturalist, Tina Erway, and part-time returning naturalist, Lisa LaVelle, greeting and educating visitors. We had a total of **723 visitors** representing **54 cities**, **9 different states**, and **7 countries** visit the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area! Tortoises were seen



throughout the season with a majority of observations occurring in April and May. Several well known tortoises were observed this season and naturalist Tina Erway was



able to observe tortoises mating for three hours! An additional 24 other species were observed by the naturalists and visitors throughout the season. Species observed include Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), horned lizards (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*; pictured left), and a Mojave rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*; pictured below)!

We look forward to the Naturalist Season every year when the desert wakes up from a winter slumber and we get the opportunity to welcome old friends and new to this beautiful ecosystem. Our Naturalist program has been on-going since 1989 and is made possible with the support of the Bureau of Land Management and the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. Join us next year in the desert!



Photos provide by Naturalist Tina Erway.



Research

During the late spring of 2018, we performed our annual Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*; MGS) camera trap survey which began in 2016. Camera trapping occurred in the eastern and western expansion areas to study the presence or absence of MGS., from May 3 to May 19. Four individuals were detected in 2018, three in the eastern expansion area and one in western expansion area. This represents a slight increase in MGS observations from the previous year. Other species observed included kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*; pictured below), and LeConte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*; pictured below). This study will be continuing for an additional two years.



Ways to Give

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which relies on financial donations to fund the critical work involved in protecting and preserving desert tortoise habitat. Donations are used to fund daily operations, acquire more desert tortoise habitat, install protective fencing, and expand our education and outreach program. There are many ways to donate. To learn more or to donate, contact us at 951-683-3872 or www.tortoise-tracks.org.

Outright Gifts

- **Join us as a member**
- **Donate land**
- **Become a monthly supporter**
- **Make a charitable gift of marketable securities (stocks), bonds, or mutual funds**
- **Give a gift membership**
- **Make a symbolic animal adoption**

Bequest us in your Will or Trust

You can create a legacy that will reflect the values you hold dear, while serving as an example for younger generations. A well-designated estate plan can result in your estate paying less tax, allowing you to leave more to your beneficiaries. If you wish to name us in your will or estate plan, please name us as:

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, a non-profit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, with principal business address of 4067 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, CA 92501.

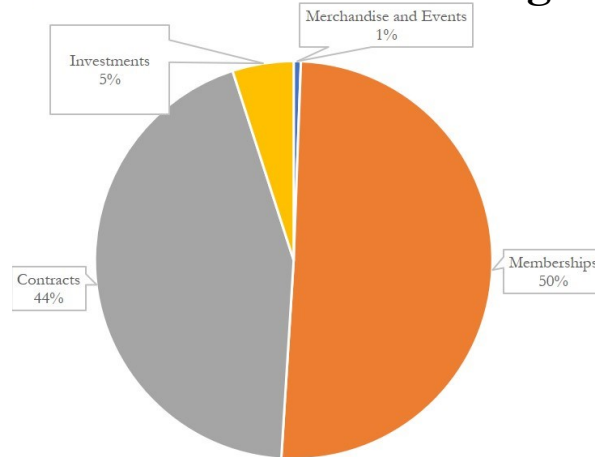
Our tax identification number is 23-7413415.

Join a Workplace Giving Campaign

We are affiliates of EarthShare California, a non-profit federation that allows workers in California to designate a nominal amount per pay period (\$1, \$5, \$10, etc.) to be donated to a charity. We are also affiliates of the Combined Federal Campaign, a similar campaign for federal employees. If you are interested in joining one of these campaigns, visit www.earthshareca.org or www.opm.gov/combined-federal-campaign. Our CFC number is 71985.

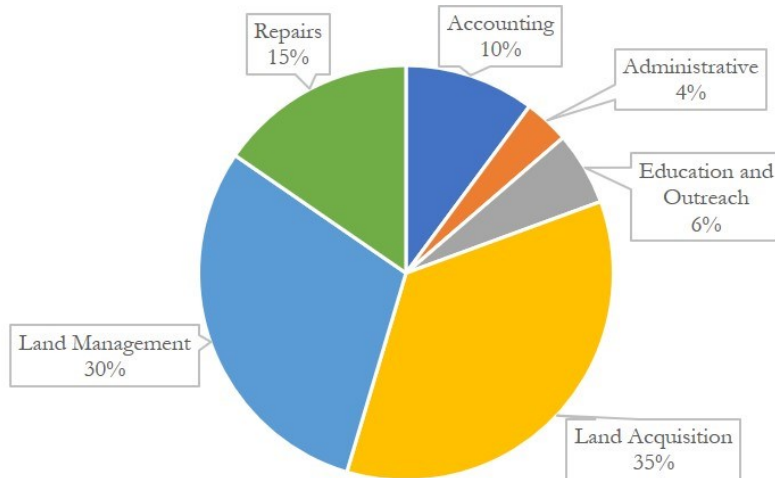
Financials for Fiscal Year

Ending December, 2018



Merchandise and Events	\$1,504.00
Memberships	\$129,821.00
Contracts	\$113,386.00
Investments	\$12,817.00

Total Income¹ \$257,528.00



Accounting	\$38,802.00
Administrative	\$13,502.00
Education and Outreach	\$21,852.00
Land Acquisition	\$134,512.02
Land Management	\$114,563.02
Repairs, Maintenance, and Misc..	\$58,886.00

Total Expenses² \$382,117.04

¹ Total Income does includes restricted income from mitigation accounts and other sources.

² Total Expenses does not include depreciation

DTPC values our many partnerships and alliances in the private, NGO and public sectors. We have collaborated with the following agencies and organizations for decades and thank them for their support.



Our 2018 by the Numbers

2213 Total Volunteer Hours

24,997 Miles Drive

1458 Board Hours Volunteered

13,423 Board Miles Driven

755 Volunteer Hours

11,574 Volunteer Miles Driven

723 visitors from **54 cities** in **7** different countries and **9** different states visited the DTRNA

An additional **960 acres** protected through **7 miles** of fencing; **Countless** trash bags of trash and invasive species removed; and **miles** of desert walked for monitoring purposes.



Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.
4067 Mission Inn Ave.
Riverside, CA 92501
www.tortoise-tracks.org
(951) 683-3872