



Spring 2018  
Edition 38: 1

# Tortoise Tracks

Newsletter



*Photo by Freya Reder*

## EVENTS

### DTPC 43rd Annual Meeting

For more than forty years the DTPC has hosted an annual meeting for members and colleagues to present the year's accomplishments and this year was no different. The annual meeting began with a delicious lunch of tri-tip steak, chicken, and various sides along with several platters of brownies and cookies that seemed to be very popular with the crowd. The tables were set with beautiful succulent centerpieces created by Dr. Kristin Berry, and a head table displayed other raffle items generously donated by so many. After lunch, the annual meeting began with a welcoming introduction by DTPC president, Ron Berger, which concluded in the renewal of Vice president Bob Wood's three year term and the introduction of new board member Larry Nelson. Larry joins us from the world of finance and has over 19 years of experience managing trust interests for companies. We look forward to getting to know Larry more and having him on the Board to advise our financial decisions.



*Dr. Phil Leitner updates attendees on the status of the Mohave ground squirrel (Photo by Alyssa Russell)*

After Ron's introduction, Jun Lee, director of land acquisition, shared some insightful stories about how we have acquired various private properties in and around the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area and the long-term, multi-generational relationships with families that have allowed for these acquisitions.

Carrie Woods, Wildlife Biologist for Bureau of Land Management– Ridgecrest office, presented

to the crowd an update on their efforts to control grazing, restore illegal Off-Highway Vehicle trails, and support the efforts of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. Preserve Manager, Jill Estrada,



*Volunteers Craig Bansmer and Jessica Russell check in guests (Photo by Alyssa Russell)*

rounded out the presentation by showing everyone the various activities and events that took place in 2017 in regards to land management, stewardship, research, outreach, and education

Noted biologist Dr. Phil Leitner presented an overview of the Mohave ground squirrel, the status of their population, and the challenges and hopes for the future. Mohave grounds squirrels have had a sharp decline in numbers due to the long drought California recently had, and their continued presence will rely on winter rains and lush spring vegetation.



*DTPC volunteer Craig Bansmer receives an engraved walking stick as thanks for his continued support (Photo by Alyssa Russell)*



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.

**The  
Desert Tortoise  
Preserve Committee, Inc.**

Founded 1974

**Board of Directors**

President	Ron Berger
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Board Member	Greg Lathrop
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**Preserve Manager &  
Conservation Coordinator**

Jillian Estrada

**Director of Land Acquisition**

Jun Lee

Telephone: (951) 683-3872

Fax: (951) 683-6949

Email: [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net)

[www.tortoise-tracks.org](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org)



Tortoise Tracks is published  
four times a year.

## Jun Lee Awarded at Desert Tortoise Council Symposium

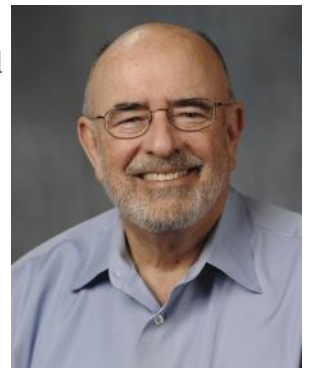
The Desert Tortoise Council Symposium took place from February 23 - 25 and included numerous exciting and thought-provoking presentations on desert conservation. Jun Lee, Director of land acquisition for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, gave a talk about the thirty years he has dedicated to helping DTPC acquire tortoise habitat within Kern, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. Jun started working with DTPC just out of college after being introduced to the organization by his college roommate, Roger Dale, who once held the position of President on the Board. Since that time, Jun has formed long-standing relationships with many landowners and has helped the DTPC acquire its more than 7,500 acres of land that it currently owns and manages. To celebrate these contributions, the Desert Tortoise Council awarded Jun with the Kristin H. Berry award, an award given to a unique individual or organization that has contributed to the conservation of desert tortoises. We offer Jun congratulations for receiving this award and thank him for his decades of work.



## Meet a Director: Ron Berger, President

Ron Berger has had a lifelong interest in conservation, serving for many years on the Board of Trustees of the Nature Conservancy of Oregon. Ron serves on the Board of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC), and as founder and President of The Desert Tortoise Conservancy.

Mr. Berger is majority shareholder of two pizzeria chains; Schmizza International, Inc. and Figaro's Italian Pizza, Inc. He serves as Chairman and CEO of both. Mr. Berger has been called 'a serial entrepreneur' by Inc. Magazine, having started, bought and sold dozens of businesses. Most notably, from 1980 to September 2000, he served as founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Rentrak Corporation in Portland, Oregon, an information and payment processor which in 2015 achieved a market capitalization on NASDAQ of over \$1 billion. Mr. Berger founded the business with a \$1,000 investment. He has served three terms as a member of the Board of Directors of the International Franchise Association and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Diversity Institute of the International Franchise Association. He has served and continues to serve on the boards of a number of for profit and non-profit organizations.



*Photo provided by  
Ron Berger*

## EVENTS

### Meet our Full-time Naturalist for the 2018 season: Tina Erway

We are excited to announce that the new full-time naturalist for this upcoming season will be Ms. Tina Erway. Tina is a current member of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and shares her home with two captive tortoises, Hank (35) and Panzer (15). Tina worked as a nurse for 25 years before realizing her need to pursue her passion for wildlife biology. She recently received her Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and will graduate with a Master's degree in Environmental Policy and Management from American Public University in June. She has been working as a biological monitor for desert tortoise, burrowing owl, and Mohave ground squirrel surveys in the Mojave Desert for the past two years. When asked about her love for the desert and the desert tortoise Tina responded

**" I have loved the desert and desert tortoise for over 25 years and it gives me great pleasure to protect and educate people regarding this sometimes hard to find desert dinosaur. For me, when you are observing them in their natural habitat it is just amazing."**

Tina shares our passion for desert tortoises and their habitat and we welcome her as our 2018 full-time naturalist! As spring commences shortly, we invite you all out to the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area to enjoy the serenity of Fremont Valley and hopefully catch a glimpse of a tortoise foraging for spring flowers. Please visit Tina and returning part-time naturalist Lisa LaVelle at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area any day between March 12 and June 3 from 8am - 5pm. For information about group trips contact us at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net).



*Photo provided by Tina Erway*



*Photo by Lisa LaVelle*

### Calling all Educators

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee would like to expand our outreach to local and regional schools. Particularly in the under-served communities of the western Mojave Desert, many children are unable to experience the nature which surrounds them. If you are an educator or work with an organization which educates and offers experiences to children, please contact us. Let's educate the next generation and encourage their love for the desert and desire to protect it!

## Join us at the Spring Work Party Saturday, March 17



*Photo by Jill Estrada*

- Removal of non-native invasive plants in western expansion area
- Camping at Red Rock State Park Friday and Saturday nights
- Land monitoring of DTPC properties on Sunday (optional 2nd day)

PLEASE RSVP for this event by emailing [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net) or call us at 951-683-3872. Further details will be sent to those who RSVP.

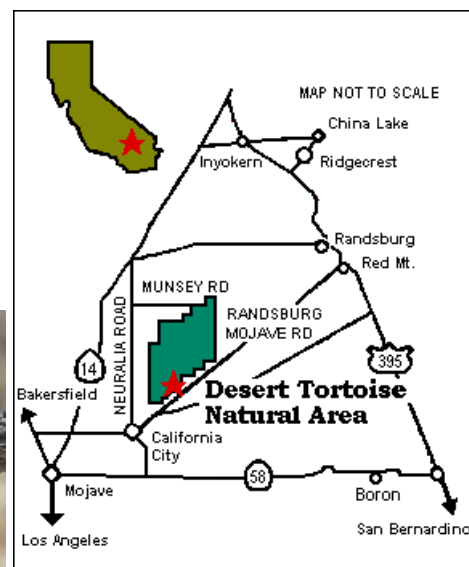
## *Please join us for the* **Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Annual Welcome Event**

**March 24, 2018**

**9 AM to 3 PM**

**at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area**

- Wildflower Walk
- Birding
- Trail Tours
- Information about desert tortoises
- Family friendly!



## THE DTPC INVITES PUBLIC COMMENTS ON OHV GRANT APPLICATION

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) invites public comments on its preliminary grant applications to the California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division. The DTPC is requesting funding to support additional fencing and restoration in the western expansion area as well as the restoration of the eastern expansion area using nursery grown plants sourced from locally collected seeds. 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 will provide 26% matching dollars to the project. If funded, the DTPC will complete fencing in the western expansion area and add more intensive restoration practices to the already fenced eastern expansion area.

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](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov). **The public comment period is open from Tuesday, March 6, 2018 to Monday, April 2, 2018. Comments should be sent directly to the OHMVR Division at [ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov) and to the DTPC at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net).** Late comments will be forwarded to the division separately. Final grant applications are due May 7, 2018. Please contact the DTPC office at (951) 683 - 3872 or [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net) for additional information.



Off-Highway Motor  
Vehicle Recreation

# GO GREEN

Our electronic newsletter is growing in popularity and we want to see it continue to grow! One added benefit of receiving the e-newsletter is that it is provided in color and is received sooner than those that are mailed. If you would like to be added to our e-newsletter list, please email us at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net).

## DTPC Calendar of Events & Volunteer Opportunities

- **March 12 — Beginning of Naturalist Season (DTRNA)**
- **March 17 — Spring Work Party (DTRNA)**
- **March 24 — Naturalist Welcome Event (DTRNA)**
- **March 5 — Preliminary OHV grant due**
- **March 6 - April 2 — OHV grant public comment period**
- **May 7 — Final OHV grant due**



Alyssa Russell



Jessica Russell

## Volunteer Corner

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee would like to acknowledge Alyssa and Jessica Russell for their contributions to the organization. Both are High School juniors and residents of California City. As part of their National Honor Society memberships they must each complete six hours of volunteer work per month. The two have been dedicating these hours towards helping the DTPC with various tasks on-site as well as contributing their brilliant skills in graphic design, artistry, and photography. We thank them both for their contributions!

## 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:

- ☐ \$25 Individual  
☐ \$40 Family  
☐ \$75 Sponsor

- ☐ \$100 Benefactor  
☐ \$200 Patron/Corporate  
☐ \$1000 Life Membership

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

- ☐ Fencing                      ☐ Land Acquisition                      ☐ Where Most Needed  
☐ Other:\_\_\_\_\_

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

- ☐ \$250                                      ☐ \$2,500  
☐ \$500                                      ☐ \$5,000  
☐ \$1,000                                      ☐ Other \$\_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Marketable Securities (Stock): Contact DTPC Finance Committee Chairperson,  
 Greg Lathrop at [2redgrey@gmail.com](mailto:2redgrey@gmail.com) or (415) 637-7187 for instruction

Let's grow the endowment!

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

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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](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org) \*



# Tortoise Tracks

THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE  
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**When visiting the desert, always remember to  
check under your vehicle for wildlife.**

