



Spring 2019
Edition 39: 1

Tortoise Tracks

Newsletter



Photo by Tina Erway

EVENTS

44th Annual Meeting Features Thought-provoking presentation about new species discoveries

This year's annual general meeting provided an optimistic overview of accomplishments the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee achieved during 2018. Dozens of DTPC members and supporters attended the event which began with friendly greetings and a delicious lunch buffet including tri-tip steak, bourbon glazed chicken, baked tofu with sautéed mushrooms, and cheesecake to top it all off.



Craig Bansmer and Jessica Russell checking in attendees

DTPC President, Ron Berger, gave an introduction describing the efforts that were taken to expand the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area from the 1,280 acres it started with in 1972 to what now is approximately 30,000 acres. Ron also held member-confirmed elections during which he was re-elected to the Board along with Rachel Woodard and Dave Zantiny. Following Ron's introduction, Jun Lee, DTPC Director of Land Acquisition, updated the audience on the 41.36 acres of land that were acquired in and around the DTRNA over the past year and the years of correspondence it took to finally acquire them. Jillian Estrada, DTPC Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator ended the 2018 summary report by presenting the many projects and events that took place last year.



One of Dr. Berry's famous succulent centerpieces

The featured speaker for the event was Dr. Jim Andre of the Sweeney Granite Mountains Desert Research Center in the Mojave National Preserve. Dr. Andre gave a presentation on recent floral discoveries in the California desert; particularly the Mojave National Preserve area. Just in the past 20 years, there has been a 8.5% increase in taxa in California deserts and since 1925 over 300 native Californian taxa have been published in Jepson. His presentation offered dozens of these recently discovered species that are rare and



endemic to the Mojave Desert and explored the idea of how many more are unknown and vulnerable to threats of habitat destruction. Dr. Andre also discussed current threats of solar developments and the eradication of pinyon and juniper woodlands. The presentation led to a number of questions about botany and the importance of herbarium records to record plant species. We thank him for providing such an interesting talk.

We would like to thank those who attended the meeting and created a fun and warm opportunity to share and discuss what we have accomplished over the years. We would also like to give a special thank you to **Bonny Ahern, Craig Bansmer, Linda Huffman, Alyssa Russell, and Jessica Russell** for all of their hard work helping to set-up for the meeting.



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
Vice President	Bob Wood
Treasurer	Laura Stockton
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Board Member	Kristin Berry, Ph.D.
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Jillian Estrada

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Tortoise Tracks is published
four times a year.

Join us at the Spring Work Party Saturday, March 16, 2019



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 or call us at 951-683-3872. Further details will be sent to those who RSVP.

Meet a Director: Laura Stockton, Treasurer

Laura Stockton is a founding member of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and has served several positions on the board since. She is also a founding and currently active member of the California Native Plant Society - Kern Chapter. Laura spent six years coordinating the development and implementation of the Environmental Science and Technology (EnSciTe) Partnership Career Academy at West High School. She retired after teaching biology, earth science, integrated science, and AP environmental science in the Kern High School District for 36 years.

Meet Our 2019 Naturalists

The 2019 Naturalist season is right around the corner and it will bring with it a new full-time naturalist. Jack Mazza grew up in San Diego, California exploring the chaparral and beaches while developing a love for spending time outside. He received his bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies with a focus in Natural History. Jack comes to us with several years of experience as an interpretive ranger at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park and a teaching assistant at UC-Santa Cruz and UC-Davis. He is passionate about outdoor education and connecting the next generation with the natural world. We very much look forward to having Jack as our 2019 full-time naturalist and wish him a warm welcome to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee family.

Lisa LaVelle will be returning for her 7th season as relief naturalist. Lisa is a resident of Ridgecrest and spends her time volunteering with the Bureau of Land Management and the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. She has contributed a lot of knowledge and dedication to the naturalist program at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area and we are thrilled to have her back this year.

The naturalist season will begin on March 11 and will conclude on June 2. We have been fortunate to receive several rain storms during the winter season and expect a beautiful wildflower bloom.



Photo provided by: Jack Mazza



Photo provided by: Lisa LaVelle



DTPC Calendar of Events & Volunteer Opportunities

- **March 11, 2019—Start of Naturalist Season at DTRNA**
- **March 16, 2019—Spring Work Party**
- **March 17, 2019—Land Monitoring begins**
- **March 23, 2019—DTRNA Welcome Party**

LAND MANAGEMENT

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 additional fencing and restoration in the western expansion 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 will provide 26% matching dollars to the project. If funded, the DTPC will complete fencing and trail camouflage in the western expansion area. This additional fencing would completely fence off an entire section (640 acres) of desert tortoise habitat. The DTPC would appreciate your comments on this project.

You can review the grant applications, along with those from other agencies, local governments, and non-profits, online at www.ohv.parks.ca.gov.

The public comment period is open from Tuesday, March 5, 2019 to Monday, May 6, 2019.

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 June 3, 2019.



Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

Natural History Notes -

The Mojave Rattlesnake

Many visitors are expected this spring at the DTRNA to explore and to enjoy the wildlife and wildflowers. One of the most important considerations in exploring the desert is being vigilant for the resident rattlesnakes. Of the 9 species of snakes found at DTRNA 2 are rattlesnakes: the Mojave Rattlesnake and the Sidewinder. The Mojave Rattlesnake *Crotalus scutulatus* is one of the most venomous desert snakes, with both a neuro- and hemotoxin in its

venom.

The venom is used for feeding and defense. The hollow fangs inject the venom that subdues prey and aids digestion. The heat sensing pits on each side of the triangular head help in locating small mammal prey. It is often called the “Mojave Green” since it is commonly greenish in color. We should avoid using this misleading common name because not all Mojave Rattlesnake color variations are green. The cryptic scale color pattern provides excellent camouflage.

Continued on next page

Venom potency should not be confused with aggressive behavior. Close encounters may result in the snake exhibiting defensive behavior, but if not cornered the rattler may remain camouflaged or try to move away and avoid confrontation. I have walked within 2 feet of a Mojave rattler resting in the shade of a shrub and it did not react at all. This reinforces the need to be vigilant for safety as well as for interesting wildlife observations. -LS



Photo by Shelley Ellis

Join us for our 3rd Annual Welcome Party At the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area

Saturday, March 23, 2019

- Wildflower walks
- Tortoise presentation
- Kids activities



Photography Contest

We are in need of new photos taken at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area for future outreach materials. We will be holding a photography contest during the Naturalist season, at the request and donation of a DTPC member. Here are the details:

- Six categories: close-up flowers, landscapes, tortoises, Mojave ground squirrels, birds, and other (Please specify category in subject line)
- Submitted to dtpc@pacbell.net by June 10, 2019
- High resolution, .JPEG files
- Top photo in each category will receive a monetary prize

Please remember to keep a distance from animals (at least 20 ft. from tortoises)

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"/> \$25 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Benefactor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Patron/Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 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 \$_____ |

- Marketable Securities (Stock): Contact DTPC Finance Committee Chairperson, Greg Lathrop at 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)

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 *



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If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, notify us
by email at dtpc@pacbell.net

Volunteer Corner

Volunteer Needs:

Fence Monitoring—The DTPC owns and manages more than 50 miles of fencing in and around the DTRNA and expansion areas which need to be monitored and repaired as needed.

Land Monitoring— We are in need of trained land monitoring teams to help us tackle the task of monitoring our parcels. Monitoring will resume in March. If you would like to become trained, please contact us at dtpc@pacbell.net

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.