

Spring 2020
Edition 40: 1

Tortoise Tracks

Newsletter

Join Us in Celebrating
45 Years of
Desert Conservation
& Stewardship



Desert Tortoise
Preserve Committee, Inc.



Information on annual meeting and celebration at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area inside

**The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Invites you to our
45th Annual General Meeting Saturday, March 28, 2020 &
Anniversary Celebration at the DTRNA on Sunday, March 29**

The DTPC's Annual Meeting and Luncheon will be held Saturday, March 28th, 2020 at **The Knights of Columbus, 719 West Avenue M, Lancaster, CA**. The afternoon Annual Meeting will feature a review of the Committee's ongoing programs, activities and plans for 2020. Speakers from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will provide updates on important activities throughout southern California. The luncheon speaker will be **Ileene Anderson**, Public Lands Desert Director and Senior Scientist of the Center for Biological Diversity!

PROGRAM

Doors Open	11:00am
Buffet Luncheon	11:45am
Annual Meeting	12:30pm to 2:45pm

To RSVP or For Additional Information Contact:

Dr. Brittany Slabach at (951) 683-3872 or Email: dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org
Please RSVP by March 20, 2020 to ensure all food arrangements can be made.

\$ _____ **Luncheon Reservation (\$45.00 per person)**

\$ _____ **Optional tax-deductible donation**

\$ _____ **Total of my enclosed check**

Name(s): _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____ **E-Mail:** _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Organizational Affiliation (if any): _____

Will you also be attending the festivities on Sunday, March 29th at the DTRNA? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, are any children in your party? ____ Yes ____ No

Please make checks payable to: DTPC, 4067 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, CA 92501

Please indicate if there are any food preferences or allergies



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
Recording Secretary	Rachel Woodard
Board Member	Kristin Berry, Ph.D.
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**Preserve Manager &
Conservation Coordinator**
Brittany Slabach, Ph.D.

Director of Land Acquisition
Jun Lee

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Tortoise Tracks is published
four times a year.

Public Comments Needed

Land Trust Accreditation

We are applying for accreditation through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (LTAC), an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. The LTAC recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places. As an organization dedicated to managing and restoring lands for species of concern, the LTAC accreditation is an important next step for the growth and stewardship activities for the DTPC. The LTAC commission invites public comment regarding our application and how the DTPC complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices>. To submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Please submit comments by May 1, 2020.

California Parks OHV Grant

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 restoration monitoring and restoration efforts in all areas adjacent to 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 funds to continue monitoring and restoration efforts related to unauthorized OHV activity on approximately 5200 acres of conservation land. The DTPC will provide some matching dollars to the project. If funded, the DTPC will be hiring an American Conservation Crew to conduct all restoration monitoring in areas directly adjacent to the DTRNA, use a citizen science approach to report fence damage and illegal incursions, use funds to repair fence damage due to incursions, and control invasive species along boundary areas commonly traveled by OHV users.

The DTPC would appreciate your comments on this project. You can review the grant application, 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 3, 2020 to Monday, May 4, 2020. Comments should be sent directly to the OHMVR Division at ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov and to the DTPC at dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org. Late comments will be forwarded to the division separately.

2020 Naturalist Season

We are excited to introduce our naturalist team for the 2020 season! Corina Godoy (pictured right) will be joining us as our full-time naturalist, while Lisa LaVelle (pictured below) will be returning as our part time naturalist. Corina, a Victorville, California native, is a graduate of Humboldt State University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Policy and Management and a minor in Botany. She has extensive experience including an internship at the Chicago Botanic Garden, where she researched competition induced mechanical defenses of *Koeleria macrantha*, a perennial grass native to California; and the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, where she worked in the herbarium, nursery, and monitored establishment and success of native species in fire-damaged areas. She recently held a research assistantship at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve in Bethel, Minnesota, where she focused on forest biodiversity through applied ecological field and laboratory methods including invasive species removal, field surveys, and environmental DNA sampling. Corina is very excited to be joining the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and working in the biome she calls home! She is excited to formally acquaint herself with the local flora and fauna, and to be an integral part of the conservation and education efforts of the DTPC.



We are pleased to have Lisa LaVelle returning as our part time naturalist for her eighth season! Lisa's knowledge and dedication are an integral part of our naturalist efforts. Lisa is excited to see and greet repeat visitors and old friends, and welcome new first time visitors to the DTRNA. **Please join us on Saturday, March 14th for our spring work party and to meet our naturalists! RSVP to Preserve Manager Dr. Brittany Slabach at dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org or call (951)-683-3872.**

Naturalist Season Special Events

Desert Closeup: An Introduction to Macro Photography – Saturday, April 4 beginning at 9am. Spend a Saturday at the DTRNA learning extreme closeup photography with photographer Tom Astle (tomastlephotography.com). This half-day workshop is for any skill or experience level. Whether you have a DSLR camera, are thinking of getting your first “big” camera, or even just want to get better at using your phone, you’ll pick up pointers on composition, lighting, lenses, and more. Tom will also talk about the important subject of nature photography ethics, and he’ll have a limited amount of extra gear that you can try out. The day will start with an equipment demonstration and a discussion of photography basics, then you’ll hit the trails for photo practice. At lunch, Tom will answer more questions, then he’ll be available the rest of the day should you like to stick around for more informal advice. Limited to 15 participants. Cost is \$40 per person; 100% of the proceeds go to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.



Naturalist Guided Walk – Saturday, April 18 at the DTRNA. During this guided nature walk participants will explore the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area with our Naturalist, learning about tortoise habitat, biology, and the effects of predation, particularly of ravens, on tortoise populations. Easy, approximately 2-mile hike. Free and open to all ages. Limited to 20 participants.

Field Sketching – Sunday, April 26th beginning at 9am. Join our naturalist Corina Godoy at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area for a hands-on nature sketching experience! Learn to observe carefully while sketching plant structures and habitats, gaining a deeper appreciation for the beauty of the desert environment. Drawing basics will be demonstrated with plenty of hands-on assistance by Corina. Limited to 15 participants.

For more event information or to RSVP contact us at dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org or call us at (951)-683-3872.

Invasion of Non-Native Plants: WEEDS at Their Worst

You may recall a story in last year's *Tortoise Tracks* about Jun Lee, former President Roger Dale and his two sons, Kristin Berry, Ray Butler, and Laura Stockton pulling and digging up the Sahara or African mustard in spring. Sahara Mustard was first discovered here in November 2017. This noxious weed has spread at a very rapid rate from its source along the roads edging the 8MinuteEnergy solar development at the northwestern corner of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. Sahara mustard, a tumble mustard, moves rapidly across landscapes, and in this case, is carried by the prevailing southwesterly winds into the original Natural Area. As of last spring, it had moved east about a half mile or more, crossing parcels acquired for mitigation by the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee into Cache Creek Wash and was on land acquired by the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife several years ago for the Natural Area. It also has invaded public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. This winter a crew from the American Experience Corps will be working to identify the eastern-most boundary and will be pulling up and bagging the mustards and other non-native species in late winter before they set seed.



These two photos of leopard lizards depict a predator at the top of the reptilian food chain. Leopard lizards eat other lizards, such as whiptails and the little side-blotch lizards. Left: a female in breeding coloration with red-orange markings by Larry Thompson. Below is another prize-winning photo by Larry Thompson. Note how he captured the eye in the photo, always a challenge. Thank you, Larry!



Winners of the 2019 Photography Contest

As part of a Photo Contest last year, we advertised for photographs (digital images) in six categories: Desert Tortoise, Landscapes, Close-up Flowers, Birds, Mojave Ground Squirrels, and Other. We received 32 submissions from six individuals for four categories but not for Birds or Mohave Ground Squirrels. Winners were:

OTHER: Sweepstakes to Larry Thompson for a collection of splendid lizard images and a 2nd Prize to Linda Huffman.

TORTOISE: 1st Prize—a tie for Larry Thompson and Charlotte Brey. Larry Thompson also received 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Prizes with an Honorable Mention to Hitomi Heap-Baldwin.

LANDSCAPES: 1st and 2nd Prizes to Linda Huffman.

CLOSE-UP FLOWERS: 1st and 3rd Prizes to Freeman Baldwin, 2nd Prize and 4th Prizes to Marcelino Hernandez, and a 4th Prize also to Hitomi Heap-Baldwin.

We will be using these wonderful photos here, in upcoming newsletters, brochures, posters, displays, and power point programs. Many thanks to you all for participating and sharing your images!



Announcing the 2020 Photography Contest

The year we again have a sponsor for the 2020 Photography Contest with monetary awards for the best photos in six categories: Desert Tortoises, Landscapes, Close-up Flowers, Other, Birds, and Mojave Ground Squirrels. The following are requirements: the photograph must be taken on the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, with 600 dpi (higher preferred), and provided by electronic mail in .jpg format as single photos or as a collection in a zip file to photocontest@tortoise-tracks.org by June 10, 2020.

We advise crouching or lying on the ground to take photos of tortoises. If you sit or lie quietly, they may walk toward you. For close-up of flowers, we are especially looking for the belly flowers (flowers so small that seeing them requires you need to be on your belly to view). Some of these are not eye-catching but nevertheless produce lovely flowers when viewed through a close-up lens. They are important tortoise forage. These include: Hill Lotus (*Acemispion* [formerly *Lotus*] *brachycarpus*), a small creeping plant with tiny yellow flowers; the Dwarf Milkvetch (*Astragalus didymocarpus*); and forget-me-nots (genus *Cryptantha*) with tiny white flowers. Especially of interest are the taller Layne Milkvetch, with upward, curved pods (*Astragalus laynae*) and the Woody Bottlewasher (*Eremothera* [*Camissonia*] *boothii*). All can be found on the web at the Jepson eflora (<https://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/eflora/>). To access, type in the scientific name on the main page of the website, and you will be taken to the scientific descriptions, line drawings, and some photos. At the Natural Area, the plants can be found on the Animal Trail: the Hill Lotus and Dwarf Milkvetch are on some low hills along the trail and the Layne Milkvetch and Woody Bottlewasher are in the small drainages. After the end of March, you can see the line drawings of some favorite plant foods of tortoises on the new Kiosk panels!

New Brochures



Favored Plant Foods of
the Desert Tortoise
(*Gopherus agassizii*)
at the Desert Tortoise
Research Natural Area*

In collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management we have developed two new brochures that will be available at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. These brochures highlight some common flora of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area and favored foods of desert tortoises. We hope that these brochures help to further educate visitors on the amazing diversity of flora that occurs at the DTRNA and the fascinating physiological adaptations of desert tortoises to their environment. Photographs used in the brochures were generously provided by Keir Morse, Freya Reder, Michael Thamann, Brittany Slabach, Sharon Schafer, Jim Andre, Chris Wagner, and Jane McEwan. Volunteer Ciara Frassinelli supplied wonderful drawings (bottom right, and elsewhere throughout this newsletter) to be included in the brochures. Be sure to pick up these brochures on your next visit!

Plants of the Desert
Tortoise Research
Natural Area*



We are in the process of updating our outreach material and are still looking for volunteers to assist in this effort. If you would like to assist please contact Preserve Manager Dr. Brittany Slabach at bslabach@tortoise-tracks.org.



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 assistance

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 *



Tortoise Tracks

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Electronic copies of *Tortoise Tracks* are in **COLOR**!
If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, notify us
by email at dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org

Calendar of Events

- March 14 - Annual Spring Work Party—RSVP today!
- March 28, 2020 – Luncheon for Members, Annual Meeting in Lancaster
- March 29, 2020 – DTPC 45th Anniversary Celebration at the DTRNA!

Celebrate 45 years of tortoise conservation and stewardship with us at the DTRNA in California City!

- April 4 - Desert Closeup: An Introduction to Macro Photography
- April 18 - Guided Nature walk with Naturalist at the DTRNA
- April 26 - Field Sketching Course at DTRNA

More information on special events inside!

GO GREEN

Receive our newsletter electronically! Electronic newsletter are received in color and sooner than those that are mailed. If you would like to be added to our e-newsletter list, please email us at dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org