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# Tortoise Tracks

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The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Fall 1994 15:2

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DTPC Vice President George Moncsko presents a bronze plaque to the Committee's founder, Dr. Kristin Berry. Dr. Berry was one of 15 recipients honored with plaques at the Preserve Committee's 20th anniversary celebration on November 5, 1994.

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## MATT BROOKS TO GIVE ANNUAL BANQUET PRESENTATION

Matt Brooks, a familiar research scientist to many of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee's members, will give the annual banquet address on January 21, 1995 at the Green Tree Inn in Victorville. The title of his talk is "Ecosystem Effects of Off-highway Vehicle and Livestock Grazing Exclusion at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area." When Matt spoke at the Preserve Committee's banquet two years ago, he presented the results of a three-year study which he used to obtain a masters degree from California State University at Fresno. At that time, he compared the plant and nocturnal rodent communities inside versus outside the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA). He found that perennial plant cover,

native annual forb biomass, soil seed bank biomass, and nocturnal rodent densities were higher inside the DTNA than outside. He also reported that the biomass of the alien annual grass (introduced from Europe and Asia), *Schismus barbatus* was lower inside than outside the fence. The findings from this study will be published in 1995 in the journal, *Environmental Management*, in an article, "Benefits of protective fencing to plant and rodent communities of the western Mojave Desert, California."

After completing the above project, Matt Brooks collected three more years of data on the biomass of

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**Matt Brooks** *continued from page 1*

spring forbs (annual wildflowers) and alien annual grasses and has analyzed the data.

Last fall, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and the Hardman Foundation provided Matt with research grants so that he could expand his research project to include soil nutrients and physical characteristics to compare different microhabitats inside with those outside of the DTNA. He also collected data on abundance of birds and lizards inside versus outside the DTNA. The evening presentation on January 21 will focus on the results of the new studies. Matt Brooks will relate this information to the value of fencing as a management tool to maintain biodiversity and integrity of ecosystems, and to preserve habitat for rare and endangered species in the western Mojave Desert.

### **DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL TO HOLD 20TH ANNUAL MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM IN MARCH AND APRIL OF 1995**

The Desert Tortoise Council will celebrate its 20th year in spring of 1995 at the Annual Meeting and Symposium in Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting and symposium are scheduled for March 31, April 1, 2, and 3 at Sam's Town. For those wishing to give a paper, poster, or to have an exhibit, please contact the Symposium Chair:

Dr. Kristin Berry  
7006 Westport Street,  
Riverside, CA 92506.

### **ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET**

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. will host the annual meeting of the corporation and banquet on Saturday, January 21, 1995 at the Green Tree Inn in Victorville. The meeting of the corporation is open to all members and the general public. The price of the dinner is \$17.00 per person, including tax, tip, beverage and dessert.

The afternoon meeting will offer an opportunity to hear first-hand about the Committee's accomplishments during 1994 and it's plans for 1995. The meeting will include a special status report on the Committee's progress towards planning and establishing a permanent visitor center and educational outreach facility in the Mojave Desert.

If you cannot be present for the afternoon meeting, we hope you will be able to join us for the evening dinner and program which will feature a talk by Matt Brooks.

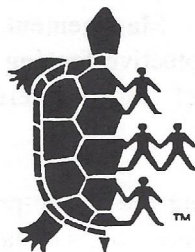
The schedule of events is as follows:

Business Meeting	2:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Social Hour	5:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Dinner Program	6:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Please note that your reservation must be received by January 14, 1995. A reservation form is provided on Page 7.



## **HAPPY HOLIDAYS**



### **The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee**

<b>Roger Dale</b>	President
<b>George Moncsko</b>	Vice President and Treasurer
<b>Laura Stockton</b>	Vice President
<b>Tom Dodson</b>	Vice President
<b>Ed LaRue</b>	Recording Secretary
<b>Jayne Chavez-Scales</b>	Corresponding Secretary
<b>Dr. Kristin Berry</b>	Advisor
<b>Bev Steveson</b>	Board Member
<b>Jun Lee</b>	Board Member
<b>Peter Gillis</b>	Board Member

## FIFTEEN NEW PLAQUES FOR NATURAL AREA KIOSK

At the Preserve Committee's 20th Anniversary celebration on November 5th, 15 individuals, families, organizations, trusts, and foundations were honored with bronze plaques. The plaques, which will be set in cement in the ground adjacent to the west-facing wall of the kiosk, are given to individuals and families who have donated over \$10,000 to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. in land or funds in the last 20 years, since the Committee was established. In exceptional cases, plaques are given for a combination of service and donations. With the 15 new plaques, there will be a total of 18 plaques at the kiosk.

The following foundations and trusts were honored with plaques: Weingart Foundation, Ruth L. Harvey Revocable Trust, Lawrence A. Harvey Revocable Trust, Rose H. Berk Trust, and Yorkshire Family Trust. In addition, plaques were presented for Joanne Smith, Mary J. Trotter, Charlotte and Albert Gould, Walter Allen of Casa de Tortuga, Kristin H. Berry, Leslie Scott Miller and Richard Curt Miller, Mary Ann and Ronald A. Henry, Marv Cornett and Mimi Loutrel, and the Westchester Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club.

The Weingart Foundation, the Harvey trusts, the Berk trust, the Yorkshire family trust, and Joanne Smith were honored for donating 288 acres of prime desert tortoise habitat to the Preserve Committee. The Weingart Foundation owned the majority interest in the donated parcel and deeded its interest to the Committee in 1992. The Harvey, Berk and Yorkshire trusts, and Ms. Smith followed suit and donated their interests in the property, giving the Committee full title to the parcel. The property has a market value of over \$180,000 and is located adjacent to the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. The donated parcel is the anchor for the Committee's "buffer zone project", an ongoing land acquisition effort to establish a 1,500-acre protective buffer along the boundary of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area.

The Westchester Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club was recognized for its long-standing support of the Preserve Committee. In

addition to providing generous financial support to the Committee over the past 20 years, the Westchester Chapter has been instrumental in educating the public about desert tortoise conservation through its meetings, shows, and publications. The club has also been active in organizing field trips to the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, providing another opportunity for residents of urban areas to learn about the desert tortoise and the western Mojave Desert. Donna Somers, the Chapter's vice president, attended the November 5 event to accept the bronze plaque on the club's behalf. In addition to presenting a plaque to the Westchester Chapter as a group, the Preserve Committee also honored three of its long-time members, Walter Allen, Mimi Loutrel and Marv Cornett, for their individual contributions.

Walter Allen is well known among turtle and tortoise enthusiasts as the owner of Casa de Tortuga, his home in Fountain Valley, California where he maintains over 400 live turtles and tortoises from around the world. He has been active in the California Turtle and Tortoise Club for nearly 30 years and served for a number of years as the editor of the club's newsletter, the *Tortuga Gazette*. Walter has traveled widely to pursue his interest in turtles and tortoises, and to support various conservation programs. Over the past several years, he has worked with Dr. Peter Pritchard to produce a series of films about turtles and tortoises of the world. As an active supporter of the Preserve Committee and the Desert Tortoise Natural Area for many years, Walter has provided substantial funding for habitat acquisition. He also provided a financial contribution towards the purchase of the Committee's motorhome, the Tortoise Discovery Center.

Mimi Loutrel and her late husband Marv Cornett have been active in Preserve Committee activities for many years. In addition to generous financial support, Mimi and Marv have been regular participants in the Committee's volunteer work parties to maintain the fences, trails and interpretive facilities at the Natural Area. Mimi has also been active in organizing field trips to the Natural Area for members of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club. Mimi attended the 20th anniversary party to accept the plaque presented to her and to Marv, who

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**Plaques** *continued from page 3*

passed away earlier this year. The Committee looks forward to Mimi's continued involvement in desert tortoise conservation.

Leslie and Richard Miller of Ridgefield, Connecticut have provided regular financial support to the Committee for a number of years. The Millers have taken a particular interest in the stewardship of desert tortoise habitat in the Natural Area and in the adjacent Rand Mountains and Fremont Valley. They have provided specific funding support for the Committee's monitoring and advocacy efforts in these areas, including designated contributions to the Committee's Rand-Fremont legal Fund. The Committee greatly appreciates the Millers' ongoing support.

Mary Trotter, who passed away in June of 1992 after a lengthy illness, joined the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee's Board of Trustees in 1975, a year after the Committee was formed and was active on the Board for 15 years. For 13 years, she served as Treasurer and Membership Chair, no small effort during a period when the Committee's budget and membership grew rapidly. She was also the Committee's representative from San Diego. From 1975 until 1987, she and her son Tom Trotter took the message about threats to wild tortoise populations to shows sponsored by chapters of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club throughout the Southland. She passed out thousands of brochures, helped to raise funds by taking donations and selling products, and found new supporters. Both Tom and John Trotter were present at the Saturday anniversary event and reminisced about how important the work of the Committee was to their mother. Mary Trotter's life was characterized by public service. She also made numerous other contributions of service to the Desert Tortoise Council, the Red Cross and National Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Charlotte and Albert Gould were among the founding members of the Board of Trustees when the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee was formed in 1974. Both Charlotte and Albert spent over 20 years at the Naval Weapons Center China Lake and Ridgecrest, before retiring to Bakersfield,

and were well known through their contributions of service to the Indian Wells Valley communities. Albert Gould nursed the fledgling Committee through the paperwork involved in incorporating the group as a nonprofit entity under the State of California, and provided prudent and wise financial and business advice during the first few years of operation. Charlotte wrote brochures and played a major role in fund-raising. The funds provided by the Goulds were instrumental in assisting the first land acquisitions for the Committee. Charlotte Gould, who is now 90 years old, sent her special regard and love to those attending the 20th anniversary celebration.

Since the founding of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Mary Ann and Ronald Henry of Ridgecrest have been stalwart advocates of stewardship and wise land use in the Mojave Desert. They donated thousands of hours (as well as annual donations of money) to maintaining the integrity of the hogwire fence around the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, to placing new signs along the fence and at the kiosk, to weed eradication, and to keeping the area free of refuse. Mary Ann conducted surveys of the flora and added new species of annual herbs and grasses to the plant list. She and Ron also worked as volunteers for the Bureau of Land Management and Dr. Kristin Berry on special surveys of the Pilot Knob cattle grazing allotment for signs of desert tortoises. The Henrys always attended the annual banquet and have provided unqualified support for over 21 years. Committee members mourned the passing of Ron Henry, who died after a brief illness in March of this year. Both Ron and Mary Ann have given a great deal in terms of service and financial support to many nonprofit entities in the local and regional community. Mary Ann joined us to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

The awards ceremony concluded with a special presentation to the Committee's founder, Dr. Kristin Berry. Over the past 20 years, Dr. Berry has literally dedicated her life to the protection of the desert tortoise, both through her professional positions in the Bureau of Land Management and the National Biological Survey, and through her substantial volunteer work with the Preserve

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**Plaques** *continued from page 4*

Committee and the Desert Tortoise Council. As the founder of both the Preserve Committee and the Council, she has played a very crucial role in shaping both organizations. In addition to devoting a tremendous amount of time to Committee activities, she has also provided substantial funding support. It was largely through Dr. Berry's initiative and persistence that the Desert Tortoise Natural Area was established. Initially proposed by Dr. Berry in the early 1970's, the Natural Area was identified by the Bureau of Land Management as a reserve in 1973 and was formally designated as an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" in 1980. Dr. Berry has led numerous research programs related to desert tortoise conservation, and is a member of the Desert Tortoise Recovery Team. Her work is recognized throughout the world, and she has shared her expertise at a variety of international conferences.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE  
DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE  
COMMITTEE (DTPC)**

The First Ten Years ... by Betty Forgey

On June 2, 1974 several residents of East Kern County and the Antelope Valley met in California City to learn from Dr. Kristin Berry of the need to "protect the welfare of the desert tortoise in the wild in the southwestern United States and to establish a preserve on the flanks of the Western Rand Mountains and in Fremont Valley". Several of those attending were Desert Empire District Garden Club members who had learned of the plight of the desert tortoise after attending programs given by Dr. Berry. By the close of the meeting a committee was formed and a secretary appointed.

At the next meeting (two months later), Charlotte Gould was named Brochure Chairman, Laura Stockton would be Tour Leader and Albert Gould became the Committee's first Treasurer. Ken Smith offered to write the Articles of Incorporation. Dr. Robert Stebbins and Dr. Nathan Cohen were named Advisors, and Betty Forgey was chosen as President of the Committee. The Desert Empire District pledged \$4,000 through the sale of

little plastic tortoise pins that spread the message: "have FAITH": Have Fencing Around Ideal Tortoise Habitat .

Four months later the Committee was involved in discussions with the Bakersfield office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over the sheep grazing issue on the Preserve. Brochures and pamphlets had been printed and widely distributed. Fund raising items included T-shirts with the message: "I May Be Slow ... But I Get There". The Committee also sold ceramic wind chimes, bolo ties and pendants, largely through the efforts of Bev Steveson who presented the "Desert Tortoise Program" to nearly 2,000 people that first year. By 1975, the DTPC received tax exempt status, diligently effected by Shirley Moncsko. Additionally, membership dues were established and the Committee obtained liability insurance. A most valuable member, Mary Trotter, joined the DTPC and several chapters of California Turtle and Tortoise Club became members. This was the year (spring) that 260 persons toured the preserve. Also, the Sacramento office of the BLM indicated the Preserve would be "closed to all forms of human activity, except as authorized by the BLM", and that there would be no sheep grazing after 1975. The BLM also declared the preserve property would be withdrawn from the Mining Laws of 1882.

In 1976, the first Annual Meeting was held. The Committee had now raised \$20,000. The BLM had a Management Plan for the Preserve, and plans were being drawn for an Interpretive Center. BLM increased the size of the Preserve to approximately 38 square miles, and the BLM recieved a congressional appropriation of \$135,000 for "development and management". It was in 1976 that the DTPC became affiliated with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as a "Project Committee".

During 1977, the BLM began fencing the preserve with the funds mentioned above, and the Committee presented plans for the Interpretive Center. The preserve was closed to grazing and designated by the BLM as an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern". The BLM exchanged 1,888 acres with Mendiburo and Rudnick.

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**The First Ten Years** *continued from page 5*

1978...Land acquisition is "on a roll", especially with the acquired 1,888 acres (as above) and TNC's shepherding.

1979...Ten thousand Tortoise Educational Packets were distributed to California schools grades K-12. And the Committee started a quarterly Newsletter - "Tortoise Tracks", Gloria Nowack, Editor.

1980...The Interpretive Center is completed and dedicated. We celebrated on April 26th with 300 people attending the ceremony, including the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Dan Beard, who addressed the group and made it official that the Preserve, henceforth, would be known as the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA) and would be the largest non-game preserve in the United States.

1981...The DTNA was officially withdrawn from Mineral Entry. The California Department of Fish and Game placed a naturalist on the DTNA to study hunting and its possible adverse effects on the tortoise population. The BLM decision to relocate one mile of fencing across the boundary of Section 5 came as a blow to Committee efforts. This is one of more than a few adverse actions of State and Federal agencies, but the Committee remains on course and nearly 300 people were given guided tours of the Natural Area. Nature trails were laid out and signed, and approximately 40 percent of the 16 square miles of private holding had been acquired.

1982...BLM exchanges land valued at \$223,000. The DTPC invests \$12,000 to equalize the land values in the exchanges. This much money (and more) has been derived from product sales.

1983-1984...Of the 9,000 acres in private ownership in the DTNA in 1979, 6,880 acres remain to be acquired.

1994...**ONLY 2,000 ACRES OF PRIVATE PROPERTY LEFT TO BE ACQUIRED!!!**

**Betty Forgey was a founding board member and the first president of the Preserve Committee. She and her husband Warren are still active supporters of the Committee and served on the Committee's Board until 1990. The above article is based on Mrs. Forgey's address at the Committee's 20th anniversary event.**

November 5, 1994

Roger Dale, President

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee

Dear Roger,

I want to apologize for not being able to join you in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the DTPC. However, I do want to share some thoughts with you. Most of you know better than I the history of the DTNA. As a Johnny come lately, I have been able to enjoy the fruits of hard work and dedication over many years before and after I arrived. The list of cooperative accomplishments seem endless and will continue to grow.

I would like to highlight a few that I feel are particularly significant.

Naturally, designation of the DTNA and construction of the perimeter fence are first since without either there would be no DTNA! And, the good news is that we will complete the perimeter fence this year with fencing on the north and west sides to enclose recently purchased private land.

The Naturalist position and the Discovery Center have been invaluable in public contact and education. I hope the BLM can eventually help fund the Naturalist position again.

The Kiosk and trails are central to instilling a sense of appreciation of the Desert Tortoise by the public.

Private land acquisition through an unprecedented cooperative effort has resulted in private land within the DTNA being reduced from 10,855 acres in 1975 to 2,000 today. Many people deserve a hand for the yeoman job they have done, since the success has been primarily since 1990.

The DTNA has served as an outdoor lab for many studies and research by some of the most noted scientists in their field. - And the list goes on.

However, above all, the DTNA stands in testimony to the dedication, and unflinching commitment of people such as Kristin Berry, George Moncsko, Bev Steveson, Warren and Betty Forgey, Laura Stockton, Carol and Clay Panlaqui, Jayne Chavez-Scales, Roger Dale, Tom Dodson, Jun Lee, a very dedicated BLM staff and many more. Your unyielding commitment to the preservation of the desert tortoise continues to remind all of us of our responsibility to all wild creatures. I cannot express how much I respect and admire the work you have accomplished. To each of you, I tip my hat and salute you.

Congratulations on this very special day.

Sincerely,

Lee Delaney

Area Manager

BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area

**RESERVATION FOR ANNUAL BANQUET**

Please make checks payable to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. and send to:

DTPC Annual Banquet  
P. O. Box 2910  
San Bernardino, CA 92406

If you have any questions, please call Roger Dale at (818) 569-5634.

**CHECKS AND RESERVATION FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 14, 1995**

Please make a reservation for \_\_\_\_\_ persons in my name, for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Annual Banquet at the Green Tree Inn, Victorville, California, to be held Saturday, January 21, 1995. I understand that the dinner will be \$17.00 per person, including tax, tip, beverage, and dessert.

I am enclosing a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ , as full payment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

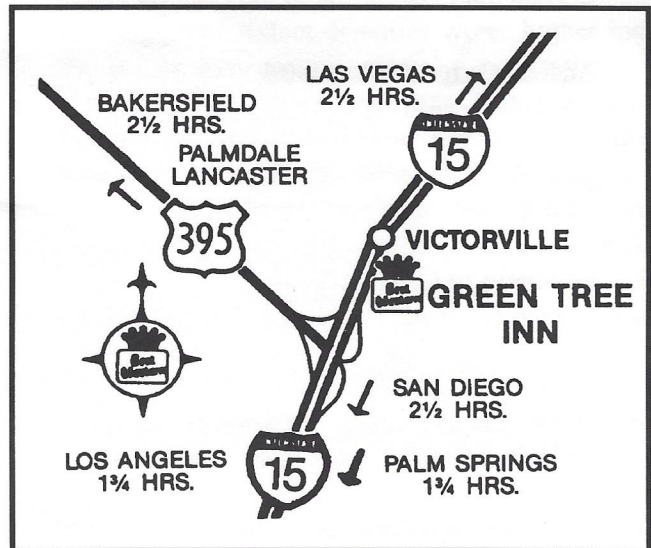
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to attend the afternoon business meeting: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

A vicinity map for the Annual Meeting and Banquet is provided for your convenience. If you are Interested in staying overnight after the banquet, call the Green Tree Inn at (619) 245-4361 for reservations and room rate information.

*Reserve Early by Completing and Mailing Your Reservation Form at Your Earliest Convenience. We look forward to seeing everyone!*



*Special Thanks to the California Turtle and Tortoise Club*

The Preserve Committee would like to congratulate the California Turtle and Tortoise Club (CTTC) which recently celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. CTTC has been a long-term supporter of both the Preserve Committee and the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. The club's various chapters have provided generous financial support for the Desert Tortoise Natural Area , and have had an important role in educating the general public about desert tortoise conservation. The Club's annual shows throughout southern California provide the Preserve Committee excellent venues to distribute educational materials and to sell fundraising products.

At this time we would like to specifically thank CTTC's Westchester, Valley and Inland Empire chapters for their recent donations to the Preserve Committee. The Westchester Chapter has requested that its donation be placed in the construction fund for the proposed Mojave Desert Education Outreach Center. The Westchester donation was made in memory of Marvin Cornett and Gerri Edelman. The Inland Empire Chapter's contribution was made in memory of Ruth Asklund.



**Tortoise Tracks**

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SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92406**

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