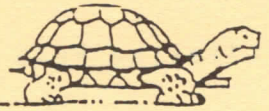


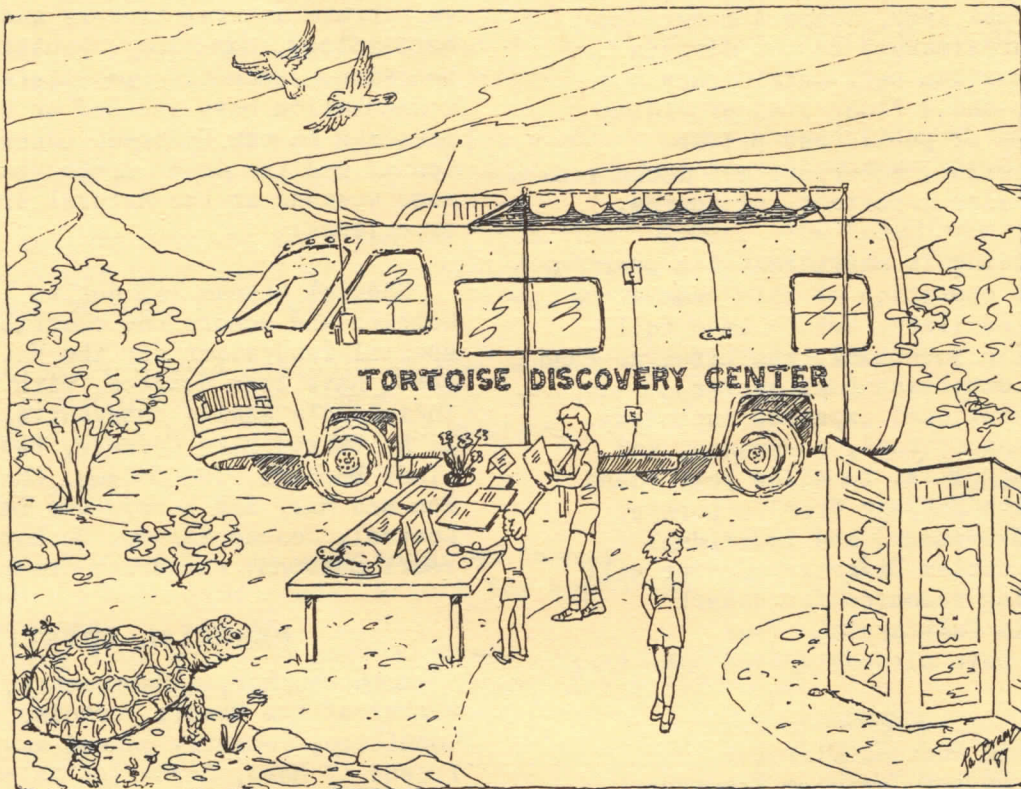
TORTOISE TRACKS



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER
P.O. Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555

SPRING, 1989
Volume 10, No. 1

MAJOR GIFT LAUNCHES TORTOISE DISCOVERY CENTER



Drawing by Pat Brame

Artist's conception of Tortoise Discovery Center
when based at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area.

LIFELINE FUND REPORT



A gift of \$25,000 is being made to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee's Lifeline Fund for the establishment of the Committee's Tortoise Discovery Center facility. This very important and generous contribution by a recent member of the Committee will make possible the purchase and adaptation of a motor home for use as a visitor center at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, and as a mobile conservation education program.

The Discovery Center will be staffed by the newly hired Committee naturalist (see accompanying article), and will add greatly to his effectiveness — both in providing interpretive services to Natural Area visitors, and protection of the preserve. The Center will also enhance other aspects of the Committee's work by building public support for our conservation goals, membership in the Committee, and serving as a hub for volunteer activities.

Lifeline Fund Report, cont.

If you have current knowledge or expertise regarding motor homes, are aware of a good purchase opportunity, or could suggest sources for donated equipment or services such as mechanical inspection, we would appreciate your input. Just give me a call at (818) 797-0739 or write to me at P.O. Box 70606, Pasadena, CA 91107, as soon as possible.

We are now searching for a suitable used, late model (about 1985) Class A motor home, tan color, approximately 27' or more in length, with maximum self-sufficiency and storage space, and a floor plan providing easy separation of public and private quarters. Interior, exterior, and mechanical condition are also important, of course.

Present funding is sufficient for start-up and short-term operation of this innovative and versatile facility, but to take full advantage of its potential, the Lifeline Fund is working to establish funding for continuing operational expenses including staff, maintenance, fuel, insurance, and educational materials, to allow year-round operation. With support from corporate, foundation, government, and individual donors, the Tortoise Discovery Center will become a leading resource for desert conservation in California. Your contributions have already helped make that possible.

Curtis Horton, Director
The Desert Tortoise Preserve
Committee's Lifeline Fund

**JEFF HOWLAND
SELECTED AS NATURALIST FOR 1989**

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is delighted to announce the selection of Jeff Howland as the Naturalist for the Desert Tortoise Natural Area during spring of 1989. Jeff will begin a four-month contract to provide visitor services on March 12. He will be present at the Interpretive Center on all weekends, as well as three days during the week, and will welcome visitors, lead scheduled and unscheduled tours, sell T-shirts and other products, and assist with wildlife protection.

Jeff has an impressive background in teaching and research on reptiles, amphibians, and deserts. He has a B.S. in Biology from the University of Illinois, an M.S. in Zoology from the University of Georgia, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate

at U.C.L.A., where he is completing a dissertation on the natural history, ecology, and physiology of the desert iguana. During the course of his studies, he also worked with several other amphibians and reptiles, including the red-eared turtle, green anole, greater earless lizard, tree lizard, and Merriam's spiny lizard.

Jeff has led field trips through desert habitats, given programs to visitors at Big Bend National Park, and has teaching experience in the subjects of ecology, vertebrate natural history and morphology, herpetology, mammalogy, evolution, and behavior. Recently his interests in conservation have focused on developing a preserve in the Colorado Desert near Desert Center and the lower Amazon basin. Join Jeff some weekend at the Natural Area for a new experience!

Special thanks are due to 117 of our members and donors who contributed to the special fundraiser for the Naturalist. Over \$4800 have been donated, with several individuals making substantial contributions: K. H. Berry, Marv Cornett, Paul Donaldson, Linda Duchein, Tom Dodson, Charlotte Gould, Ron and Mary Ann Henry, Joy Lane, Mimi Loutrel, Joanne Nissen, Barbara Schworm, Pearl Seidman, and Brett Stearns.

MEMORIAL DONATION

Ruth Boucher, a Sacramento, California, member of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, recently passed away. A very dear friend of hers, Catherine Smith of Maryland, sent Ruth's husband, Forrest, a check in the amount of \$500.00 to be donated to Ruth's favorite charity. Mr. Boucher tells us that "Ruth loved her tortoises," and that he has no doubt that "she would want it to go toward bettering the tortoise preserve."

The donation, made to the Naturalist fund raising drive and received in early December, gave the effort a tremendous start ... a wonderful tribute to a friend of the tortoise.

NEW TOUR GUIDES WELCOMED

Katherine Bueller, Gladys Elder, Tamara Gracey, Doll Hanson, Robert Lafond, Mary Shepherd, Clarence Smith, and Martin Spann have responded to the appeal for tour guides. Betty Forgey, Tour Coordinator, anticipates thousands of visitors to the Natural Area this spring, and is looking forward to working with them and welcoming back the "seasoned guides".

GENERAL INFORMATION for DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA TOURS

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT THE NATURAL AREA ANY TIME. AT THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER YOU WILL FIND ILLUSTRATED INFORMATION AND SELF-GUIDING NATURE TRAILS.

Tour Guides will be available to groups of 10 or more, provided the Committee is notified of a group's desire to tour the Natural Area.

Call Betty Forgey (619) 762-6422 to book a tour...or write P.O. Box 307, Boron, California 93516.

April and May are typically the best months for wildflower appreciation and opportunity to observe tortoises above ground.

Weekday tours are acceptable. Booking for weekend tours should be made as soon as possible - there are limitations on the number of tours available on the weekends.

April 22nd and May 6th are this year's "Open Tour" dates. The Committee will attempt to accommodate as many small groups and individuals as possible on these date -- but bookings must be made with Betty Forgey ahead of time.

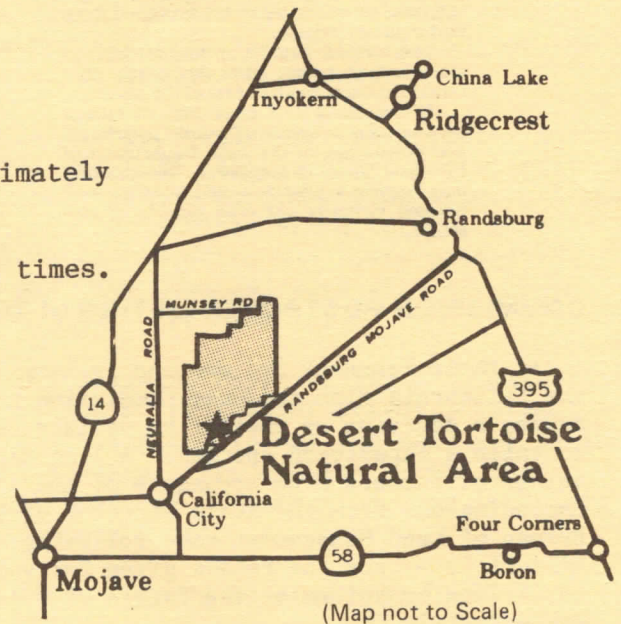
Tour participants should assemble at the parking lot no later than 8:45 a.m. Most tours last approximately two hours. (By late May tours should start by 8 a.m. if the days are especially hot. You will be advised.)

Participants MUST:

- Wear sturdy shoes - no open toes, no thongs.
- Be able to walk over sandy terrain for approximately two miles.
- Not bring dogs onto the Natural Area.
- Keep small children under surveillance at all times.

Participants MAY:

- Carry drinking water.
- Wear a sunhat and use suntan lotion.
- Carry a camera and/or binoculars.
- Expect to need a sweater or windbreaker early in the day.
- Wear long pants.
- Be prepared for extremes in weather such as wind, heat and/or cold.



You may encounter other reptiles such as the Mojave green rattlesnake. Tour guides will advise precautions.

DIRECTIONS: Approximately one mile after you pass the Lakeshore Inn on the Mojave-Randsburg Road, you will leave the paved road and drive to the left onto a dirt road. Proceed approximately five more miles until you see the Desert Tortoise Natural Area sign - turn left to the entrance of the Natural Area and continue on to the Interpretive Center and parking area.

Betty Forgey,
Tour Coordinator

THURSDAY, February 16, 1989 The Sun /A11

The Sun Opinion

Editorials

Help for tortoises should begin soon

The Bureau of Land Management's lack of enthusiasm for promptly placing the desert tortoise on California's threatened species list is hard to understand.

BLM wants the decision deferred two to four years. That stance has angered and surprised state biologists, who worked with BLM officials for a year in preparing the listing proposal.

BLM officials said that listing the tortoise this year as a threatened species could alienate sheep grazers, miners and off-road vehicle enthusiasts, who might otherwise cooperate in efforts to save the tortoise.

Apparently, the BLM wants more time to sell them on the idea.

That leaves the public wondering why:

- The BLM hasn't been pushing the concept of tortoise protection among these groups already.

- The agency is so deferential — even groveling — in dealing with groups whose activities on public lands are supposed to be under its supervision.

The tortoise population has declined as more human beings more frequently penetrate the once-remote areas of the desert.

If something isn't done soon to launch even a mild program of public awareness and precaution, as the state Department of Fish and Game is suggesting, the question may become academic — and tortoises may become virtually unknown outside of museums.

COMMISSION POSTPONES LISTING of TORTOISE

At their February 3rd meeting in Long Beach, the California Fish and Game Commission postponed making a decision on whether to declare the desert tortoise a threatened species. A last-minute deluge of letters from opponents of the listing — including one from the State Director of the Bureau of Land Management (see following Editorial) — was the reason given for waiting until June to determine the future of California's state reptile.

Members of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, the Desert Tortoise Council, and representatives of several other organizations attended the meeting on behalf of the tortoise. They gave eloquent and factual testimony, encouraging the Commission to accept the recommendation of the California Department of Fish and Game, which was based on biological data, that the tortoise be listed as threatened. Don Moore, of the Kerncrest Audubon Society, offered the following thought:

"If we yield to the politics of procrastination in the vain hope that things can be improved by better plans, more meetings, and deeper studies, today may mark an important turning point: the point of no return."

EDITORIAL

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT TURNS AWAY FROM PROTECTING THE TORTOISE

The desert tortoise received a severe blow on February 3, not only from the Fish and Game Commission but also from Bureau of Land Management's State Director, Ed Hasteley. After giving the impression that the Bureau of Land Management planned to remain neutral on the State listing, Ed Hasteley delivered a last-minute letter to the Commission, not only opposing the listing but requesting a delay of two to four years!

In his letter, Mr. Hasteley essentially asked them to delay the listing for political reasons — until new BLM programs to enhance desert tortoises and their habitat could be evaluated. He also did not want to dampen the support he is supposedly getting from user groups. When questioned by reporters from the Los Angeles Times, Hasteley said that he feared that the State listing could be perceived as overly restrictive by sheep grazers and off-road vehicle enthusiasts who work and play in the vast deserts of California. What about the biological evidence? The sky has fallen in on the tortoise — belittling the facts will only place this beleaguered reptile in further jeopardy.

The Board of Trustees is upset and extremely disappointed with Mr. Hasteley. In the last few years, the Board has enjoyed improved relations with the Bureau, particularly with former Ridgecrest Area Manager Patty McLean. Mr. Hasteley's position signals a "business as usual" approach, a rejection of on-the-ground changes to protect the tortoise outside of two very limited areas, the Desert Tortoise Natural Area and the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Whatever Mr. Hasteley's purpose, he has made his intentions toward the tortoise very clear: DELAY. FAVOR THE USERS. PREPARE MORE PLANS. TALK. HOLD MEETINGS. DON'T MAKE WAVES. SACRIFICE THE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

In the last issue of Tortoise Tracks, we reported that the Bureau of Land Management has two new plans — one for the entire geographic range of the tortoise in the

southwestern United States, and one for California specifically. We want our readers to understand that these documents are just plans, nothing else. We need changes on the ground to reduce high mortality rates. We must have:

- Reductions in off-road vehicle use in prime habitats;
- Severe cuts in the extent and intensity of sheep grazing, which is rapidly deteriorating the habitat;
- Reduction in losses and fragmentation from energy, mineral, agricultural and urban projects.

The Bureau of Land Management is arrogant to believe that they can produce plans and undertake changes alone, especially when large portions of tortoise habitat are on a mixture of private, state, and federal lands. The State of California can also play a major role through the California Endangered Species Act and the California Environmental Policy Act. Without State listing, the Department of Fish and Game is severely hampered in its abilities to protect the tortoise and to negotiate mitigation and compensation measures with developers, especially on energy and State highway projects. For example, in recent mitigation and compensation packages for solar power development at Kramer, the State-listed Mohave ground squirrel played the pivotal role, not the tortoise. Furthermore, sources of State wildlife funds are not available to unlisted species.

We call upon the Bureau to change its position, to withdraw the letter of February 1, and to begin working together to implement major changes in land use. Mr. Hasteley should not forget his charge from Congress under the Federal Land Planning and Management Act of 1976. The Bureau is supposed to provide for multiple use as well as sustained yield. So far, all we have seen in the California deserts is a severe downward trend in tortoise populations, loss of habitat, and deterioration in vast areas. This is not sustained yield. Why wait for more plans? The 1980 California Desert Conservation Area Plan was a disaster for the tortoise. The 1979 plan for the Desert Tortoise Natural Area was not successful in stemming declines. WE NEED A CHANGE and WE NEED IT NOW.

The Board of Trustees
Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

If our readers wish to contact Mr. Hasteley, his address is:

Mr. Ed Hasteley, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2800 Cottage Way Room E-2841
Sacramento, CA 95825

Please send copies of your letter to Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson. Their addresses are:

Senator Alan Cranston
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0501

Senator Pete Wilson
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0502

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USERS CLAIM VICTORY IN LISTING DELAY

A February 22nd article in Cycle News gives credit to "devoted" off-road vehicle users for delaying the State-listing of the desert tortoise as threatened.

Mike Bishop, author of the article, quotes several off-road vehicle (ORV) users, many of whom spoke at the Commission meeting. If the quotes in the article are accurate, most speakers representing ORV users presented Fish and Game Commissioners with erroneous information. For example:

- Pat Davison, representing the California Association of Four-Wheel Drives, claimed that State listing is not the only way to get needed funding. Proposition 70 and the Federal Land and Conservation Fund both have needed money available.

FACT: Listed species have highest priority for receiving funds. Candidate species for listing are second in line, and unlisted or rejected species are last. The tortoise has received some limited funds so far because it is a candidate for listing, but the dollar amounts have been very limited. If the tortoise is rejected for State listing or the State listing is delayed, the tortoise is unlikely to receive badly needed monies from Proposition 70, the Wildlife Tax Check-off Fund, or the Environmental License Plate Fund.

- Ron Fite, from the California Desert Coalition, warned the Fish and Game Commission that State listing would kill the

El Mirage Recreation Area Project, an intensive off-road vehicle use area.

FACT: El Mirage is no longer prime tortoise habitat and is not being sought by tortoise biologists in any agency or conservation group for the tortoise. El Mirage has not ever been sought for the tortoise.

● Ed Waldheim, an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Commissioner and American Motorcycle Association Representative, said that OHV funds promote tortoise conservation and that "millions of dollars have been put into access guides, signs, fencing, and ranger salaries."

FACT: The OHV Commission has yet to give a single dollar to help conserve tortoise populations and their habitat.

● Ed Waldheim also claimed that "with simple listing of the tortoise, 23 million acres of desert land would be severely restricted to OHV use."

FACT: There are about 2.5 million acres of remaining tortoise habitat in the California desert, about half of which is severely damaged. As of this time, only 23,000 acres (or less than 1/10 of one percent) are closed to recreation vehicles. The only closed area is the Desert Tortoise Natural Area.

As you can see, the off-road representatives presented bizarre, erroneous, and often inflammatory statements to the Fish and Game Commissioners in an effort to stop the State listing. They do themselves and their memberships a disservice with this disinformation.

AMERICAN HONDA TO BUILD VEHICLE TEST FACILITY ADJACENT TO NATURAL AREA

American Honda will begin construction of a vehicle test facility on a six-square mile parcel of land at the northwest corner of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area this spring. American Honda's recent acquisition at Cantil includes five square miles of old agricultural fields and one square mile of tortoise habitat.

L. Bruce Nybo, Inc., a Bakersfield engineering firm acting on behalf of American Honda, first proposed development of the land at Cantil in summer of 1987 to Kern County. The Kern County Planning Department solicited opinions on the proposal, and the Desert

Tortoise Preserve Committee, Bureau of Land Management (Ridgecrest Area Office), and Fish and Wildlife Service responded with extensive comments, expressing concern about impacts to tortoises on the one-square mile parcel of remaining tortoise habitat, as well as to the adjacent Desert Tortoise Natural Area. Potential impacts include loss of tortoises, loss of habitat, growth in the region from development of light industrial facilities, increased noise, and reduction in quality of the wild nature of the Natural Area. In February of 1988, Kern County issued a permit with 49 conditions, stating that there would be no significant environmental impacts.

Several conditions on the County permit are mitigation/compensation measures for the tortoise. They include:

- One or more of the following mitigation/compensation measures:

Note: The County has no required date for completion of this measure.

(1) Dedication of two adjacent sections (Sections 5 and 7) on the northwestern edge of the Natural Area, with fencing of outside boundaries and rehabilitation of damaged areas, OR

(2) Dedication and restoration of acreage similar to Sections 5 and 7 adjacent to or within the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, OR

(3) A cash contribution in an amount not to exceed \$300,000 to the Nature Conservancy for land acquisition or to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee for projects, activities, and expenses that will enhance the continued preservation and existence of the tortoise;

- Construction of a tortoise-proof fence along the southern and eastern parts of the project area, adjacent to the Natural Area;
- Removal of the tortoises on the square mile of habitat within the project area and relocation to another site;
- An education program for employees;
- Measures to discourage raven use of the area, including control of garbage;
- Measures (earthen berms, walls) to prevent noise levels of 45 db or greater

into the Natural Area or adjacent tortoise habitat.

Construction did not begin immediately because American Honda had to acquire the property. The sale was finalized in late 1988. Before American Honda can break ground on the tortoise habitat this spring, they first must secure a Memorandum of Understanding from the California Department of Fish and Game. We understand that Honda and its representatives have contracted with Peter Woodman and Dr. Tom Mulroy for assistance on tortoise surveys and relocation efforts.

We will be closely following the progress on this very sensitive project and will give you a status report in the Summer issue.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

Tom Dodson, newly elected Second Vice-President of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, has had almost 20 years of experience in land use planning, environmental and resource management, and regulatory compliance management. Since 1983 he has been president of Tom Dodson and Associates, an environmental consulting firm located in San Bernardino, California.

Mr. Dodson grew up in San Bernardino, graduated from Pacific High School, and has a Masters Degree in Geography from the University of California, Berkeley. He has served as visiting lecturer in environmental planning at California State University, San Luis Obispo, and as an environmental consultant to private industry and Sonoma County. He was Supervising Environmental Specialist for the County of San Bernardino for almost two years, where he assisted in the streamlining of local environmental guidelines. This effort subsequently won a national award.

From 1976 to 1985 Mr. Dodson served as the civilian Environmental Protection Officer for the Naval Weapons Center at China Lake, California. This involved the management of the total environmental program for a 1.1 million acre naval research laboratory and test facility located in the Upper Mojave Desert. Under his administration, the Center's hazardous waste management program was developed and the operation plan prepared. This methodology was then adopted for all Navy facilities on the West Coast. During his tenure a burro removal program was initiated and over 7,000 of these exotic animals were removed and habitat restoration programs begun.

As president of Tom Dodson and Associates, Mr. Dodson assumes responsibility for a broad range of activities including preparation of environmental documents, regulatory permitting and land use planning assistance, site-specific resource evaluations, development of waste management programs, and working with local public and governmental agencies in developing and implementing solutions to complex problems. He makes frequent presentations to decision-makers and provides expert testimony at administrative and judicial hearings. He also negotiates compensatory mitigation packages with regulatory agencies, including the Corps of Engineers, Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Energy Commission.

At present Mr. Dodson is acting as consultant for the South Coast Air Quality Management District in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the regional air quality management plan. He is also involved in a number of waste disposal site selection projects in the Mojave Desert.

Mr. Dodson and his wife, Brynn, live in San Bernardino and actively support various area-wide environmental groups and concerns.

MUSEUM EXHIBIT PLANNED

The desert tortoise is the subject of a museum exhibit being developed for the San Bernardino County Museum. The exhibit, which will consist of two, 5' x 5' panels, is being coordinated by the Inland Empire Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club, with Dr. Kristin Berry serving as technical advisor. One panel will deal with desert tortoise natural history and paleontology. The other will focus on impacts on the desert tortoise population and its habitat. The second panel will also introduce the concepts of endangered species, fragmentation, and indicator species. Projected completion of the display is Calendar Year 1989.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS IMPORTANT

Membership in the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is an expression of your concern for the welfare of the tortoise, and it offers you a means of staying informed during these crucial times. Dues, which are on a calendar year schedule, help to pay for your newsletter and administrative costs of running the organization. If you have not already done so, please take a moment and renew.

WE APPRECIATE YOU...and your membership!

FENCE MAINTENANCE PARTY

Please plan to join the team on April 2nd to work at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. Bring shovels, rakes, and heavy hoes; lunch and lots of water; and meet at the northeast corner of California City Blvd. and Neuralia at 8:00 a.m. (note time change that morning). But most of all, meet and work with others who care about the tortoise. For further information, call Bev Steveson at (805) 832-9121.

The work has already been started by 21 men and women who turned out on March 5th. The work party was a great success, according to Bev. Huge piles of sand and russian thistle were moved away from approximately 1/2 mile of fence. Probably seven miles of fence remain that need attention -- so we need all of the help possible for this and future work parties.

CALENDAR

March 17 thru 20, 1989
DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL
FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
Mesquite, Nevada

May 6, 1989
"OPEN TOUR" of the NATURAL AREA
Reservations Required
See Page No. 3

April 2, 1989
FENCE MAINTENANCE PARTY at
DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA
See Information Above

May 21, 1989
CALIFORNIA TURTLE and TORTOISE CLUB
VALLEY CHAPTER SHOW
14201 Huston Street
Sherman Oaks, California

April 22, 1989
"OPEN TOUR" of the NATURAL AREA
Reservations Required
See Page No. 3

June 17, 1989
CALIFORNIA TURTLE and TORTOISE CLUB
WESTCHESTER CHAPTER SHOW
For Information, Call (714) 962-0612

April 23, 1989
CALIFORNIA TURTLE and TORTOISE CLUB
ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER SHOW
Harbor Blvd. at La Palma Ave.
Anaheim, California

DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA and COMMITTEE INFORMATION ... and FUND RAISING PRODUCTS ... ARE AVAILABLE AT CALIFORNIA TURTLE AND TORTOISE CLUB SHOWS.

TORTOISE TRACKS is published quarterly by the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.
Jean Jones, Editor

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