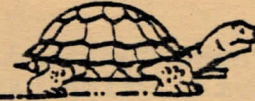


# TORTOISE T-R-A-C-K-S



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ SUMMER 1981  
P.O.Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 + Vol. 2, #4 + Gloria Nowak, Editor

It's vacation time; and no doubt many of you will be driving on the desert roads, if only en route to cooler climes. Theoretically, all the tortoises are estivating in their burrows by now; but there might be a few stragglers who don't know it's past their bedtime. We know that YOU will watch for them on the roads, but please remind your less tortoise-conscious friends to do likewise; and if they should encounter one, to take it off the road about 100 feet in the direction it was going and as gently as possible, to avoid a potentially fatal loss of its water supply.

It's also time to renew your membership, if you joined or rejoined about this time last year. Remember that you can be at least a contributing member no matter where you live.

BLM DESERT PLAN: We have been promising you a report on this as soon as the details became available, but the scope of the recently released California Desert Conservation Area Plan is far too great to be presented within the confines of this newsletter. However, we can summarize briefly the amount of protection to be afforded the resource of greatest concern to the Committee. The 12.1 million acres of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) will be managed, used, developed and protected under four use classes: Class I (Intensive or multiple use), Class M (Moderate use), Class L (Limited use) and Class C (Controlled use). 2.6% of BLM lands will be subjected to Intensive use, while 48.5% will be restricted to Limited use.

It should be noted that the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA) is listed as an area of Limited use, but with an overlay designating it as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). In the CDCA there are some 75 locations designated as ACEC's, which commit BLM to initiate immediate measures to protect the resources and crucial habitat in those areas. Therefore, protection of the DTNA seems assured. However, the Chuckwalla Bench, Ivanpah Valley and Chemehuevi Valley populations of the desert tortoise did not receive the assurance of protection that would have been accorded these other Class L but potentially viable tortoise density areas if they had received the ACEC designation, as did the DTNA. Nonetheless, it is understood by the Committee that individuals and organizations may become involved in the ongoing decision-making processes of the Plan, and that there is a "certainty of increasing knowledge of resources and changing human priorities that will require the Plan to be able to adjust to unanticipated future needs".

If you would like to receive more detailed information about the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, complete with map; write to the Bureau of Land Management, 1695 Spruce Ave., Riverside, CA 92507.

OTHER INHABITANTS OF THE NATURAL AREA: It's hard to imagine Committee members visiting the DTNA and forgetting to look for tortoises...On May 23rd, 6 Committee tour guides became so excited and engrossed in searching for ANTS; under the guidance of Roy Snelling (L.A. County Museum) and Chris George (Cal Poly Pomona), that tortoises were momentarily forgotten.

These outstanding specialists helped us to explore the world of desert ants, which have been the source of many questions during tours and about which we had known very little.

Our experts estimate that there are 15-20 species of ants inhabiting the N.A. We saw 6 species in the immediate vicinity of the Interpretive Center, and there could be even more in this limited area as many ants are nocturnal, like most desert mammals. We learned that the galleries and tunnels of a harvester ant nest can cover over 1 acre, being several feet deep and with many surface openings. The black harvester ants can have hundreds of thousands of workers per nest, all produced by 1 queen. The honey ants of which we observed 1 species store nectar in the abdomens of special workers who spend their lives hanging in chambers. These workers (repletes) resemble peas in size and shape.

The brief but informative session revealed the major role ants play in the desert ecosystem, and how little is really known of the different species and behaviors of invertebrates in the Natural Area. - L.S.

REMEMBER OUR PRODUCTS...and to include our fine quality heavy-weight cotton T-shirts in your vacation wardrobe. You have a choice of our beautiful new "Desert Tortoise Natural Area" design in all sizes, and the original, eye-catching "I May Be Slow...But I Get There!" front-and-back style that now comes in all matching colors for the kids; so it's mix or match for the entire family, as you prefer. Will you be visiting friends or relatives during your travels? Show your appreciation with our unique gifts. The tortoise or bird wind chimes will replay your visit with every breeze. If someone there likes to sew, one of our needlecraft kits might be just the thing. Or you could send them the tortoise picture after you return home; already stitched, framed and ready to adorn any wall with a cheerful note. Of course, you will thank them for their hospitality on one of our postcards or note cards. Write for our order forms and our brand new updated brochure; so that you can show everyone you meet on your trip what this is all about. They will learn that a gift of one of our products is also a gift of life for the tortoises.

Exciting announcement coming in the fall issue! Meanwhile, best of luck!

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