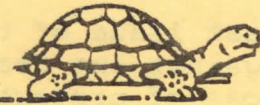


TORTOISE T-R-A-C-K-S



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ SUMMER, 1982
P.O.Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 + Vol. 3, #4 + Gloria Nowak, Editor

On Tuesday, May 25th, renowned British actor David Attenborough and his staff were in the Mojave Desert to film desert tortoise behavior for the British Broadcasting Company's new series, Life in Deserts. They requested our advisor, Dr. Kristin Berry, to arrange for pictures of tortoises emerging from their burrows early in the morning and retreating to cover later in the day. Kristin, members Lori Nicholson Humphreys and Ken Humphreys organized the observations and filming at a desert tortoise study plot near Kramer Junction. The BBC's Life on Earth series recently aired on PBS TV in southern California and was a tremendous success. The Life in Deserts series is scheduled to be released in January, 1984 in Great Britain. The BBC contributed a small donation to the DTPC, Inc. for the efforts of our members.

The conservation chairman, Kerry Perkins, of the Southwestern Herpetological Association, brought seven members to the Desert Tortoise Natural Area on Saturday and Sunday, May 22nd and 23rd, to advisor Dr. Kristin Berry with a census of marked tortoises in the vicinity of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area Interpretive Center. Southwestern Herp members volunteered their time for two days to help with the census of a one square mile area and to determine the effectiveness of using amateurs to seek tortoises. Laura Stockton and Bev Steveson helped to supervise. Fifty-two tortoises were found, 35 of which were marked in 1979. Our advisor thinks that amateurs can be helpful in conducting censuses. The question is whether such methods will be cost-effective. Thank you, Kerry Perkins and Southwestern Herp Association members for your help on the Natural Area.

Mary Ann Henry of China Lake, California surveyed private lands in the Desert Tortoise Natural Area; for rare, threatened and potentially sensitive plant species this spring. The survey was commissioned by The Nature Conservancy. Mrs. Henry looked for such rare species as Mohave spiny-herb (Chorizanthe spinosa), Mohave Eriophyllum (Eriophyllum mohavense) and the Mohave fishhook or pineapple cactus (Scelerocactus polyancistrus). She will be preparing a report in the next month or so, and we look forward to sharing the information with you.

On June 25th, Bev Steveson and Laura Stockton explored Section 24, on the east boundary of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. As usual, the diversity of the plant and animal life proved to be amazing and exciting. However, the excitement was quickly dampened upon the finding of two live tortoises trapped in a vertical 15-foot deep mining pit. The mature female was extremely emaciated, while the subadult female was in good condition. Since both of them had burrows along the edge of the pit, they were moved $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the south. On July 16th, the adult female was again sighted, grazing on dry Schismus. There is still concern about her chances of survival.

While we are busy raising funds, giving programs, fighting legal battles, etc., we must not ignore the onsite problems, which are also of immediate concern. Any volunteers for a "pit" party this fall? - L.A.S.

In the last issue of this newsletter we described the Committee's legal action against the State Lands Commission, currently in progress, for the purpose of protecting the Desert Tortoise Natural Area from the encroachments that would otherwise result from an adjacent real estate development in California City; and requested donations to our legal fund to help defray the cost of the transaction. The response so far has been extremely gratifying, and we are deeply appreciative of every contribution we have received. A special word of thanks goes to Walter Allen, whose generous gift of \$500 illustrates his continuing devotion to our cause which he has maintained over the years. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the following contributions which have been received as of this writing: Westchester Chapter, CTTC, \$400; Joy Lane, \$300; Marc S. Colen, \$200; Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club, \$150; Pasadena Audubon Society, \$100; Patrick A. Doheny, \$100; Desert Planters of Ridgecrest, \$79.25; Louise Spetnagel, \$50; Gerhard Schumacher, \$50; Geraldine Renchard, \$50; Jeannette Graham, \$20; Georgette Theotig, \$20; Ruby Jenkins, \$20 and Ted & Karen Meyers, \$5. Again, many thanks to all. If you did not receive the previous issue of this newsletter and were not aware of this matter, we will be happy to send you a copy of it on request. Finally, a reminder to all that donations are tax-deductible.

Due to the illness of Wanda Milliken, who was the Committee's elected treasurer, Mary Trotter has agreed to be our acting treasurer for the remainder of the year. We would like it known that she is doing this despite her already-total commitment to other activities related to the preservation of the desert tortoise.

MEMBERSHIP MEMO: If you have not already done so this year, you are invited to join or renew your membership in the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, via the attached form which has been provided for your convenience. If you have, please pass it along to a friend!

REMEMBER OUR PRODUCTS! Whether they are for yourself or for all-occasion gifts, you will find something for every age and every lifestyle; for every member of the family to enjoy the year 'round. Choose from clever or beautiful T-shirts in all sizes and a choice of colors, or pleasant-sounding wind chimes, or attractive and educational stationery items; among others. Send for our handy order forms. Best wishes!

DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE, INC.
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