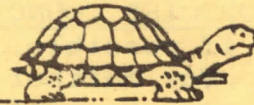


# TORTOISE T-R-A-C-K-S



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ SPRING, 1983  
P.O.Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 + Vol. 4, #3 + Gloria Nowak, Editor

SOME WORDS OF THANKS: To everyone who braved the soggy weather on January 29th and attended our annual banquet in Bakersfield, including those who came from as far away as the Bay area. It provided a good opportunity for recently formed groups to meet and compare notes on their efforts at various levels to help the tortoise...Thanks also to those who came to the Pit Party on January 8th, for the purpose of filling in a 20-foot deep mining pit on the Natural Area, in which some tortoises were trapped last summer. Wielding their shovels along with Fred Coe of the Bureau of Land Management were Laura Stockton, Bev Steveson, Warren and Betty Forgey, Ron and Mary Ann Henry, William G. Watson, Royal Gould and Leo Nowak. With that hard-working crew, the formidable task was completed by lunchtime...Thanks again to the Henrys and also to Dr. Helen Hammer for their contributions of \$100.00.

UPDATE ON THE COMMITTEE LAWSUIT: The Spring, 1982 issue of the newsletter contained the details of the Committee's ongoing legal action against the State Lands Commission, including the circumstances which led up to it. A copy of this issue will be sent on request to those who have not seen it. The following report was submitted by one of our distinguished attorneys who is donating her time and expertise to this matter; in order to bring you up to date on the status of the proceedings:

The tortoise went to court! On January 21, 1983, the first hearing was held in the lawsuit we filed against the State Lands Commission. [That Commission failed to adopt measures to protect the Natural Area from increased California City urban development that will result from the State's decision to give up its entry rights onto properties that border the Natural Area.] The lawsuit charges the State Lands Commission with failing to perform its duty as trustee for the State's wildlife when it ignored recommendations in its own Environmental Impact Report for a fence and/or buffer area to isolate the fragile habitat from off-road vehicles, domestic animals and other intruders.

The Honorable James G. Bowles, Kern County Superior Court Presiding Judge, heard arguments in Bakersfield, from the DTPC and from the State Attorney General's office on behalf of the State Lands Commission. The legal issues revolve around two discovery motions made by us that would allow us to inquire into the reasons and activities surrounding the Commission's decision. The motions are critical; the ruling, which is anticipated within ninety days, will affect our ability to proceed with the litigation.

- Joy Lane

We will continue to keep you informed of the developments in this case as soon as they are known to us. Meanwhile, we would like to remind you that although our attorneys are donating their services, the proceedings are very costly; so any help that individuals or groups can provide would be greatly appreciated. Donations for this purpose should be marked "legal fund" and are, of course, tax-deductible.

1983 OFFICERS: President, Laura Stockton; Vice President, Carol Panlaqui; Recording Secretary, Betty Forgey; Treasurer, Mary Trotter; Corresponding Secretary and Assistant Treasurer, Gloria Nowak.

THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM: Plan to attend this worthwhile annual event if possible. This year it will be held in Lake Havasu City, March 26-28. For further information and reservations, see the attached sheet and be sure to send it in before the deadline. Learn about the current status of the tortoise in all four of the states in which are found its habitat and its problems.

SUMMARY OF 1982: A total of 1,928 people saw the Committee slide programs last year during presentations by Committee members and the Bureau of Land Management, and this represents an increase over the previous year. There were 8 guided tours of the Natural Area, in which 225 people participated. BLM reports at least 1,600 visitors there over a period of 267 days.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE: The Committee has a series of fascinating and informative slide programs for schools, clubs, etc.; prepared for different audience levels: kindergarten through 3rd grade, older students through adult general public, and college level. They can be presented on request by Committee members who happen to be in your area, or the programs themselves may be purchased or rented. They are equipped with a cassette-tape recorded commentary as well as a typewritten script for a "live" performance. Write for additional details about this.

TOUR GUIDES: The Committee is always looking for volunteers to conduct group tours along the nature trails of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, and provide more information about the animal and plant life of the area than people could otherwise learn. Write for information about the training program.

MEMBERSHIP: It requires only a love for the tortoise and a sincere desire to save it from eventual extinction to join in our efforts. A membership blank will be sent to you on request.

MEETINGS: All interested persons are welcome to attend our meetings and learn about our activities and concerns. The next two meetings will be on Saturdays, March 12th and May 7th; in Ridgecrest and Inyokern respectively. If you would like to attend, write for further information and directions, at least two weeks in advance.

Best wishes till next time. See you at the DTC Symposium!!!

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

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# Desert Tortoise Preserve

SIZE: 38 square miles .

LOCATION: The Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA) lies on the western edge of the Mojave Desert just north of California City.

HISTORY: Research of the desert tortoise by Dr. Kristin Berry moved the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to close the public lands of the proposed Desert Tortoise Preserve to recreational vehicle traffic in November of 1973. The following year the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) was formed by private citizens concerned about the welfare of wild tortoises. The DTPC's first goal was to have the area fenced in order to protect this desert habitat from unauthorized use by off-road vehicles and livestock. In 1977 the BLM installed a mesh fence around most of the perimeter. The fence permits free passage of all wildlife. The DTPC became a project committee of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 1976. Since that time, with funds raised mainly by the DTPC and augmented by the Southern California Chapter, TNC has acquired 2-1/4 sections of private holdings. There remain 11 square miles of private land to be acquired. (When this is achieved, the DTNA will be the largest non-game preserve in the United States.)

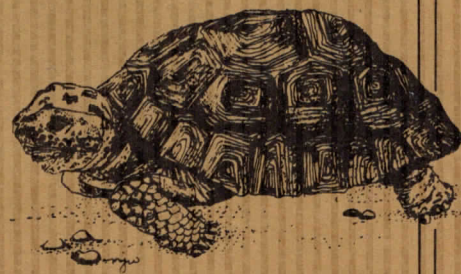
Illustration: Nancy Welch

GEOGRAPHY: The DTNA is primarily flats and low rolling hills cut by small washes and wash stringers with about 3 square miles of steep, rocky canyons. Elevations range from 1920 to 3100 feet.

BIOTA: Temperatures in the summer range from 60° to over 110°F. Winter temperatures range from below 15° to 57°F. Rainfall occurs primarily between November and February and generally averages from 2 to 5 inches. Winds are from the southwest and velocities vary from dead calm to in excess of 70 mph. There are an estimated 30 square miles of diverse Creosote Bush Scrub, 3 square miles of Joshua Tree Woodland, 3 square miles of Creosote Bush Rocky Slopes and Canyons, and 2 square miles of Salt-bush Scrub in washes. The dominant shrub in the upper story is creosote bush (Larrea tridentata). Small perennial shrubs in the understory include burrobush (Ambrosia dumosa), goldenhead (Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus), cheesebush (Hymenoclea salsola), Anderson thornbush (Lycium andersonii), and peach thorn (L. cooperi). Common wildflowers include Mojave aster (Machaeranthera tortifolia), desert candle (Caulanthus inflatus), keysia (Glyptopleura marginata), desert chicory (Rafinesquia neomexicana), scaly-stemmed sand plant (Pholisma arenarium), Venus blazing star (Menzelia nitens), and evening snow (Linanthus dichotomus).

Grasses include Indian rice grass (Oryzopsis hymenoides) and split grass (Schismus barbatus). DTNA supports over 160 species of flowering plants, and a high diversity and density of wildlife. There are 29 species of breeding birds (including the LeConte's Thrasher and Ash-throated Flycatcher) and many migrating birds; 28 species of reptiles (including the highest known densities of desert tortoise); and 23 species of mammals (including the rare Mojave ground squirrel).

desert tortoise  
Gopherus agassizi



**ACCESS:** From Los Angeles, the DTNA may be reached by traveling northwest on Interstate 5 to its intersection with Highway 14. Head east on 14 and through the town of Mojave. At California City Blvd., turn right and travel through California City to Randsburg-Mojave Road.

**VISITOR HINTS:** The best time to visit the Desert Tortoise Natural Area is in April and May. An Interpretive Center (kiosk) is located approximately 5 miles north of California City Blvd. just off the Randsburg-Mojave Road. There you will find illustrated information and self-guiding nature trails. Help us protect the plants and wildlife in this Preserve. Remember, no camping, hunting, trapping, collecting, fishing, motor vehicles, horses, or pets are allowed on the Preserve.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** For further information concerning the Desert Tortoise Natural Area or membership with the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc., and their fund raising, products, organization tours, and illustrated lectures, write:

Desert Tortoise  
Preserve Committee, Inc.  
P.O. Box 453  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

or

Southern California  
Project Office  
The Nature Conservancy  
849 S. Broadway, 6th Flr.  
Los Angeles, CA 90014  
(213) 622-6594

