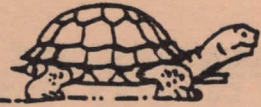


TORTOISE T-R-A-C-K-S



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ SUMMER/FALL, 1986
P.O. Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 + Vol. 6, #4 & 5 + Gloria Nowak, Editor

We apologize for the long delay, but circumstances made it necessary for us to issue a combined summer and fall newsletter.

A VERY BELATED NOTE OF THANKS to those who attended the fence repair party #5 in May, with the happy news that due to the generosity of those who made it possible for us to purchase additional equipment, a lot of work was accomplished in a very short period of time by 9 volunteers (including Steve Smith of the Ridgecrest BLM office). The others were Mimi Loutrel, Marv Cornett, Harry Smith, Carol & Clay Panlaqui, Warren Forgey, Laura Stockton and Bev Steveson. The results were 10 major repairs, 17 minor ones and the construction of a "gate" near the Kiosk; because there were enough tools so that 3 areas could be worked on simultaneously.

NEW STUDIES PUBLISHED ON THE DESERT TORTOISE: Our research advisor and founder, Dr. Kristin Berry, recently published three papers on the desert tortoise. One paper, on the incidence of gunshot deaths in desert tortoise populations in California, is in the June issue of the Wildlife Society Bulletin. Two other papers are in the March issue of Herpetologica -- one summarizes research conducted by the Bureau of Land Management between 1976 and 1985 in California, and a second summarizes data on relocation, social behavior and movements. If you want copies, please send a postcard to Kristin Berry at the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1695 Spruce St., Riverside, CA 92507.

FEDERAL LISTING OF THE DESERT TORTOISE AS A THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES IS WARRANTED. In December of 1985, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service published a special finding on the desert tortoise in the Federal Register. The Fish & Wildlife Service evaluated the status of the desert tortoise and determined that federal listing (as threatened or endangered) is warranted throughout the geographic range. Unfortunately, the Service does not have funds or staff to prepare a "listing package" for the tortoise at this time, because other species are in more serious trouble and have higher priority.

TORTOISE POPULATIONS AT THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER ARE DECLINING! At the 11th Annual Meeting and Symposium of the Desert Tortoise Council, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee members learned the results of recent Bureau of Land Management studies at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. Special surveys conducted on a 3-sq. mile study plot at the Interpretive Center in 1979 and 1985 indicate a 34% decline in tortoise populations inside the fence over a six-year period. Much of the decline appears associated with tortoises under the age of 15-20 years and may be the result of very high raven predation. Vandalism (deaths attributed to shooting and mutilation) and vehicle kills accounted for about 20% of the deaths and probably caused abnormally high mortality rates. The study also revealed that visitors are illegally releasing captive tortoises and turtles of other species. The study indicates that more protection is needed from law enforcement officials.

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL MEMBERS VISIT DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA. On March 24th, about 50 members of the Desert Tortoise Council toured the Natural Area as part of the 11th Annual Meeting and Symposium. Visitors included people from Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and South Carolina. Beautiful weather, displays of wildflowers and numerous tortoises combined to make the tour one of the best the Council has ever had.

CONGRATULATIONS, BEV STEVESON! Bev won first place in the Reptile and Amphibian Category in the 1985 Fish & Game Commission Photography Contest for a beautiful photograph of a desert tortoise eating checker fiddleneck. Bev's photo and those of other award winners are featured in the June 1986 issue of Outdoor California.

COMMITTEE RECEIVES NATIONAL CONSERVATION AWARD: The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee received one of five CHEVRON CONSERVATION AWARDS given to organizations during 1986. The award includes a check for \$1,000 and a plaque. Founding President, Betty Forgey, and our current President, George Moncsco, flew to Washington, D.C. in May as guests of Chevron to receive the award and attend a banquet for award winners. Also attending the banquet was Jim St. Amant, a member of the Board of Directors of the Desert Tortoise Council. Jim received one of ten conservation awards given to individuals in the professional category. Congratulations, Jim! While in Washington, D.C., Betty and George took the opportunity to meet with government officials to discuss current issues and problems of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. They had appointments with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Congressman Bill Thomas and representatives of Congressional appropriations committees.

IT'S TIME TO THINK ANNUAL BANQUET...and we would love to see you on Saturday, January 31st, at Hodel's Buffet in Bakersfield; where you will receive an update on the Committee's achievements in the past year and goals for the future. In addition, you will witness a fascinating and unusual presentation by Anna Martyn, Curator of the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest; entitled: "An Inside Look at the Lives and Structure of Desert Wildlife." Price and exact schedule will appear in the winter issue, along with a reservation blank; but meanwhile, mark your calendar!

IT'S ALSO TIME TO THINK CHRISTMAS! There's a fund-raising product for nearly everyone on your list, and that makes it a double gift; because the purchase you make is also a gift of life for the tortoises. In addition to our eye-catching T-shirts, ear-pleasing wind chimes, crewel kit, poster, postcards and note cards, we call your attention to our beautiful sew-on patch and - brand new - two very elegant bordered color photo postcards, of the tortoise or a group of kit foxes. Send for order forms and place your order early!

DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE, INC.
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