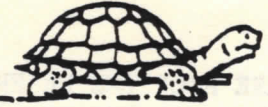


TORTOISE TRACKS



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ SPRING, 1987
P.O. Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 Vol. 8, No. 1

FUND-RAISING FOR LAND ACQUISITION

GOOD NEWS! REPORT ON THE FALL FUNDRAISER: In December of 1986, escrow closed on the acquisition of three parcels of highly-desired property on the Natural Area. The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee could never have tackled the purchase of the 948.5 acres without the expertise of The Nature Conservancy's Land Protection Director, the commitment of the Wildlife Conservation Board (the land purchasing arm of the California Department of Fish and Game), **and** the hundreds of Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee supporters, friends, affiliates, and members.

The purchase price was \$248,000. The Wildlife Conservation Board contributed \$112,000, the Preserve Committee paid \$50,000, and the balance is on account at The Nature Conservancy office.

I wish I could personally thank each and everyone for their concern and generosity! Donations came from nearly every state in the nation and from four countries overseas. Hundreds of friends in the California Turtle and Tortoise Club responded, as did Desert Tortoise Council members, California Garden Clubs and members, Audubon Societies and members, Herpetological Societies and members and other wildlife groups. The generosity of so many people was indeed gratifying. Approximately 7,500 appeals were mailed out and donations amounted to about \$24,000.

-Betty Forgey-

MITIGATION MONEY FOR LAND ACQUISITION

DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE RECEIVES MITIGATION MONEY. Last fall, the Preserve Committee received some special mitigation funds to acquire small parcels on the Natural Area. The mitigation money was the result of an agreement between San Bernardino County and Luz Engineering Company for mitigation of parts of the solar power development at Kramer Junction. The Committee has identified a few small parcels for acquisition, and The Nature Conservancy is in the process of negotiating with the landowners. We hope to have more good news for you later this year.

NATURAL AREA NEWS

BUT LISTEN TO THIS! Between May 10 and 19, 92 people signed the register at the Interpretive Center. Here are some of their comments: "Saw 1 tortoise, jack rabbit, lots of lizards,"..."3 turtles, 6 zebra tail and 2 whiptail lizards,"...(1 badger in the road, 3 large tortoises and lots of lizards,"..."saw a turtle, lizards, 1 snake, very lucky, wonderful place,"...4 tortoises, zillions of lizards, our second time here,"..."great fun,"..."we love it,"... The Desert Tortoise Natural Area could never receive better testimonials than are written in the visitor's register. Visitors' discussions were mainly from California, but some people registered from New Jersey and Massachusetts.

FENCE REPAIR. On Saturday, April 25, twelve people made 9 major repairs, 17 minor repairs, and placed 24 signs on the Natural Area fence. Many yards of fence were also straightened. Participants included George Moncsko, Laura Stockton, Warren Forgey, Mimi Loutrel, Marv Cornett, David Darby, Mary Shephard, John Rowlands, Mary Ann and Ron Henry, Bev Steveson, and Steve Smith. Thank you all!

LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS

PLEASE HELP THE DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA BY WRITING LETTERS OF SUPPORT TO YOUR TO YOUR CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS. Conservationists have long recognized a number of problems which jeopardize desert tortoise populations. One problem is the substantial **private inholdings** within the Natural Area and another area set aside by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to protect the tortoise, the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern. These two areas contain the highest-known densities of tortoises in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts, respectively. Unfortunately, both have significant private inholdings which pose serious threats to long-term management and integrity. As you may remember, we have lost 1.5 sq. miles from Natural Area boundaries since 1980, because of threats from private land owners.

The BLM, Defenders of Wildlife, and 11 other national conservation groups are lobbying Congress for \$600,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for money to buy some of the critical lands during fiscal year 1988. The funds would be used to buy lands that private owners want to sell--the acquisition would be voluntary. If we are successful, the 1988 request may be the first in a 4-year campaign. The BLM has indicated that they cannot effectively spend more than \$600,000 during the first year, because of limited staff. However, additional appropriations could be spent in subsequent years.

We urge you to join us by calling, visiting, or writing your congressional representatives. Be sure to: (1) request support for a \$600,000 congressional appropriation from the Land and Water Conservation Fund; (2) state that funds would be used to acquire habitat from **willing sellers** in the Desert Tortoise Natural Area and Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical environmental Concern; (3) mention that these two areas are critical to long-term survival of the tortoise; (4) remind them that these acquisitions will reduce conflicts between private land owners and the federal government and will allow better protection and management of the areas; (5) remind them that the BLM, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Desert Tortoise Council, and California Turtle and Tortoise Club already have made significant investments to protect the tortoise; and (6) describe your own personal interest in the areas, e.g., how often you visit or want to visit.

You must realize that your letters and phone calls are of considerable importance. Although national conservation groups can lobby, their letters do not begin to match the power of letters and calls of people from southern California and elsewhere. We especially need to let our congressmen from eastern Kern and Riverside counties know what we want and how important the projects area. If several hundred letters arrive at once, we can be assured of success!

Please write or call the following:

SENATORS: Senator Alan Cranston and Senator Pete Wilson, Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D. C. 20510.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. For the address, use: House Office Building, House of Representatives, Washington, D. C. 20515, as well as the information below.

The Honorable William Thomas (R-Bakersfield); 202-22502915; Aide--Brian Webb
The Honorable Al McCandless (R-Riverside); 202-225-5330; Aide--Miss Monty Tripp
The Honorable Bill Lowery (R-San Diego); 202-225-3201; Aide--Elizabeth Dawson
The Honorable George Brown, Jr. (D-Colton)

THE CRANSTON DESERT PROTECTION BILL, S.B. 7. As most of you know, there is little tortoise habitat in state and national parks and monuments. This might change, if Senator Alan Cranston's Desert Protection Bill passes as it is now written. There are four major **Crucial Habitats** for the tortoise in California. Parts of two **Crucial Habitats** in the eastern Mojave and eastern Colorado deserts are included in the bill. These habitats are in the southern Ivanpah Valley and in small parts of the Fenner and Chemehuevi valleys. The southern Ivanpah Valley and a small edge of the Fenner Valley are part of Senator Cranston's East Mojave National Park proposal. Some tortoise habitat in the Chemehuevi Valley is part of the wilderness package. This habitat is south of the proposed East Mojave National Park and is about 20-50 miles west and southwest of Needles.

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee endorses the Desert Protection Bill, SB 7, **if the important tortoise habitat described above remains in the legislation.** When you write, please mention your concern for tortoise habitat in Ivanpah Valley and the Fenner-Chemehuevi valleys; request that these areas be included within the proposed East Mojave National Park and wilderness systems. When negotiations begin on SB 7, these important tortoise habitats may be dropped because they are in valleys and low country. Usually our legislators make big efforts to save the scenic mountains but are far less concerned about the associated valleys. So we must make special efforts to mention the tortoise and its habitat. Write especially to Senator Pete Wilson, Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C. 20510.

WILDLIFE, COASTAL and PARKLANDS INITIATIVE. The Planning and Conservation League hopes to get a Wildlife, Coastal and Parklands Acquisition Initiative bond act on the June 1988 ballot. The bond act will provide substantial funds for land acquisition for the coast, parks, and important plant and wildlife habitats. The Planning and Conservation League must gather more than 600,000 signatures between June 15 and November 15. Anyone interested in gathering signatures may write Betty Forgey, POB 307, Boron, CA 93516.

NEW PRODUCTS

T-SHIRTS. Our ever-popular "I MAY BE SLOW...BUT I GET THERE!" front-and-back design T-shirt now comes in a rich maroon, silk-screened in pale yellow for an outstanding color combination. The dark color is nice for kids and men and is also striking for women when worn with off-white or beige pants. Prices are \$6.00 for children's shirts (sizes S, M, L) and \$9.00 for adults (sizes S, M, L, and XL).

CARDS AND WOOD PRODUCTS. We have a new tortoise note card, designed just for us by Pam Hessey of Martinez, California. Pam donated her time to prepare this delightful watercolor of the fabled tortoise and hare in a brand new confrontation. Cards and envelopes are 60 cents each or 10 for \$5. **A great gift item.** Bev Steveson donated two new post cards at 25 cents each. Both are glossy and bordered in black. One is of a tortoise in wildflowers and the other of a kit fox family. Carol Panlaqui has located a new line of handcrafted wood tortoise sculptures, excellent for gifts. Prices range from \$6 to \$31 for a carved and polished hardwood magnet, stamp dispenser, crayon holder, dime bank, pencil holder, child's or kitchen step stool, and a tortoise that just looks beautiful. Please write for new product fliers to our Products Chairman, Carol Panlaqui, at 630 Plaza Amigo, Palm Springs, CA 92262 or to the Committee address on the letterhead.

-Carol Panlaqui-

SPECIAL AWARDS

BEV STEVESON WINS GRAND PRIZE IN CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST! Our own Bev Steveson topped her achievement last year, when she received a first place for her beautiful photograph of desert kit foxes. This year she took first of show with a Great Blue Heron and fish. BETTY FORGEY WON BEST OF SHOW IN THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL'S 1987 PHOTO CONTEST. Betty's sharp close-up of a hatching desert tortoise told a story of the struggle and wonderment of emerging life. CONGRATULATIONS!

OTHER NEWS

On May 9th, The Los Angeles Times released a timely article concerning the Natural Area and invited the public to visit "the largest concentration of descendents of prehistoric tortoises in this protected habitat." Information for the especially well-written article was supplied by Patty McLean, Area Manager of the Bureau of Land Management's District Office in Ridgecrest, and Fred Coe, visitor information specialist.

The Twenty Mule Team Museum in Boron has docents who concur that there is a great deal of interest in the desert tortoise. The Museum has a desert tortoise display and docents answer questions almost daily about the tortoises. The Museum has directed visitors to the Natural Area from 18 states, England, Japan, and Germany.

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