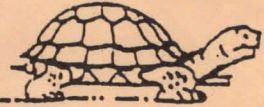


# TORTOISE TRACKS



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

WINTER, 1987  
Volume 8, No. 4

## SIGNIFICANT EVENT HELD AT NATURAL AREA

Saturday, November 21, 1987, was a beautiful fall day at the Natural Area as approximately fifty people attended special ceremonies as John Kalish became a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ranger. He was given his gun and badge during the formal delegation ceremony by Hugh Riecken, BLM Associate District Manager. Among those present were many representatives of the BLM and members and supporters of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, including our fence repair crew - their chores for the day successfully completed.

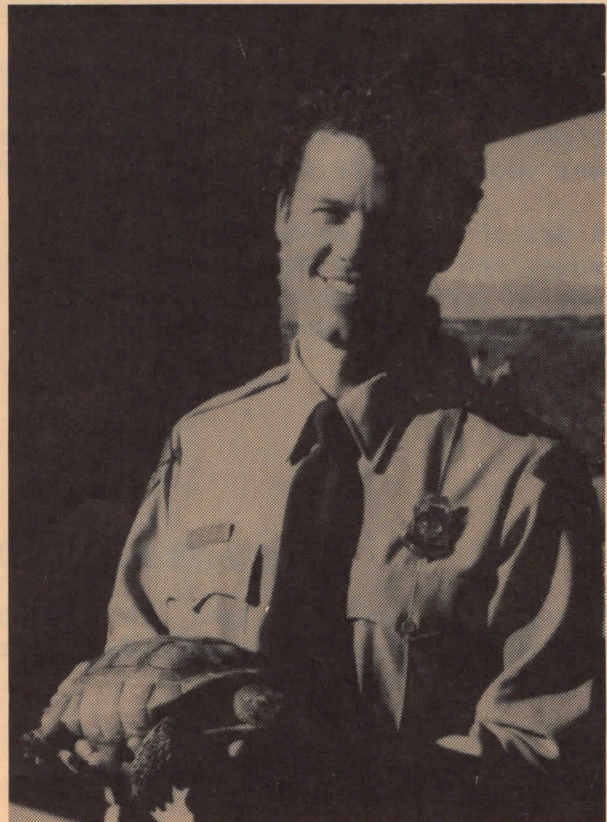
BLM Area Manager, Patty McLean, brought her captive tortoise to share with the group. Serving as a living reminder of the focus of our concern, it basked in the sun during the ceremonies, then posed patiently with Ranger Kalish while the cameras clicked. In stark contrast, several tortoise carcasses were displayed, offering mute testimony to the crimes committed against the tortoise in its native habitat - a vivid reminder of the significance of this event.

John Kalish is the first BLM Ranger specifically assigned to provide additional resource protection and on-the-ground law enforcement presence at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. His assignment represents a re-direction of BLM priorities to this important desert tortoise habitat area.

WELCOME, RANGER JOHN KALISH!

Kalish holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Wildlife Management, and has been working for BLM in outdoor recreation and surface protection since 1978 in both Colorado and Arizona. This is his first BLM assignment in California. Kalish has completed training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia and is now a qualified Federal law enforcement officer.

The federal delegation of law enforcement authority is the process by which BLM Rangers are authorized to perform law enforcement actions on public lands and occurs only after extensive training in the Federal judicial process.



Ranger John Kalish

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

November 21st was a bright and sunny day on the Natural Area and we had enough volunteers to form three fence repair work teams. It was good to see some new volunteers along with many past regulars. The three groups really pitched in and finished all their tasks that morning. The number of people and the experience we now have makes the job go quickly. Thanks to each of you for all your help and especially to Bev Steveson for organizing the work and to Steve Smith of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for bringing out the materials and working with us.

That afternoon it was very satisfying to watch John Kalish being sworn in by Hugh Reiken (the Bureau of Land Management Deputy District Manager) as the Ranger who will have primary duties of patrolling the Natural Area and the surrounding desert. With the well documented human impacts and resulting tortoise population declines, we have been pushing for increased law enforcement out there and now we have it. Welcome, John! I'm looking forward to working with you. Visitors to the Natural Area should meet John and say hello.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue, we had the opportunity to pick up 20 acres in the Natural Area at a recent Kern County tax sale. Thanks to Bev Steveson and Kingsley Wells for attending the sale for us and making the winning bid - at a very favorable price. We also are in the process of accepting another 10 acres in the Natural Area as a year-end donation. These land donations are carried out in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and are a good way the Committee can acquire land and offer potential tax benefits to the donor. If you know any potential donors, please tell them how they can help the tortoise and themselves. Just drop us a note at our P.O. Box or contact TNC, San Francisco directly.

I'd like to extend my invitation to everyone to attend the Committees' annual meeting and dinner on Saturday, January 23rd, in Bakersfield. This is the perfect time to meet all the Directors, catch up on accomplishments for this past year, make friends and have dinner with us.

To all of our friends and supporters, I send the best wishes for this Holiday Season and the coming New Year. Together we have accomplished much this past year in tortoise protection and public education and I am looking forward to your support next year. Thanks.

-George Moncsko-

LIFELINE FUND-RAISING DINNER POSTPONED

We regret to announce that it has become necessary to postpone the dinner previously scheduled for Saturday, February 6, 1988. Watch for news of a new date in the future!

ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET

The Annual Meeting and Banquet of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee will be held Saturday, January 23, 1988, at Hodel's Buffet on Olive Drive in Bakersfield, California. The total price for the dinner is \$8.50.

Please consider attending the afternoon Business Meeting - this is your opportunity to hear first-hand of the Committee's achievements in the past year and of its goals for the future. If you cannot be present in the afternoon, perhaps you will be able to join us for the evening events.

Your reservation must be received by January 15, 1988. A reservation form and further information are provided on the inside of the cover sheet.

Schedule

Business Meeting	2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Social Hour	5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Dinner and Program	6:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Program

Our Annual Dinner Speaker will be Dr. Tony Recht of California State University, Dominguez Hills, who will entertain us with a 40-minute slide presentation on our rare, State-listed Mohave ground squirrel. As some of you know, the Mohave ground squirrel is found only in the western Mojave Desert and is active about three to four months a year in springtime. It estivates in summer and fall and hibernates in winter. Tony conducted research on this elusive animal almost full-time between 1973 and 1981, focusing on home ranges, territories, foraging habits, and interactions with other species. More recently he has delved into details of reproduction and juvenile behavior and has compared the habits of Mohave and Antelope ground squirrels. His beautiful slides and eloquent descriptions of ground squirrel family life will make this a very special presentation.

Tony also travelled to Mexico to conduct research on the endangered Bolson tortoise and developed a special light-sensitive transmitter to determine when this shy species emerges from its burrows. In addition, he has studied the lives of Norway and roof rats in the cities of southern California. Join us for a fun-filled evening of entertaining stories and learn more about animal life on the Natural Area!

YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

1988 holds the promise of being a dynamic year for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and the Natural Area, offering hope for making significant gains in our efforts on behalf of the desert tortoise.

We hope that you have already returned the form provided for membership and/or donations in the last newsletter . . . if not, we hope that you will! The support of each and every one of our members and donors is important and very much appreciated. Additional copies of the form are also available by writing to the Committee.

DESERT TORTOISE TO BE CONSIDERED FOR STATE LISTING AS A THREATENED SPECIES

The desert tortoise has been protected from vandalism, harassment, collection and sale for many years under special Fish and Game codes. Unfortunately, the special legislation has not given the tortoise adequate protection from population and habitat losses on state and private lands. In July of this year, the Desert Tortoise Council petitioned the California Fish and Game Commission to list the desert tortoise as a threatened species under the new state Endangered Species Act.

The procedure to list a species with the state is a long process, but so far the tortoise is doing well. The California Department of Fish and Game reviewed the petition and found it to be adequate for consideration. The Department then recommended to the Fish and Game Commission that the listing petition be accepted for formal consideration. On November 10th, several members of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, the California Turtle and Tortoise Club, and the Desert Tortoise Council attended a Fish and Game Commission meeting in San Diego to support the petition. After hearing opposition from a representative of CORVA (California Off-road Vehicle Association), the Commission decided to accept the petition for consideration!

In the next few months, we will be asking for your support for the listing. We expect opposition from some user groups and must be ready to counter their arguments. The Department of Fish and Game has a year to decide whether the tortoise deserves state listing.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES INSTITUTES NEW RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The Nature Conservancy, a national organization that acquires ecologically valuable lands, recently received a donation of \$10,000.00 for the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. The donors requested that a simple and unobtrusive plaque be placed at the Natural Area. We are in the process of honoring their request. This special gift stimulated the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee to develop a plaque program to honor and acknowledge individuals and groups who have contributed a total of \$2,500.00 or more to the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee over the years. Three groups of donors will be recognized, depending on the value of the contribution in money, land, stock or similar assets:

SPONSOR	\$2,500.00	Bronze plaque to be engraved with "SPONSOR" at top, followed by several names and year(s).
BENEFACTOR	\$5,000.00	Bronze plaque to be engraved with "BENEFACTOR" at top, followed by two names, each followed by year(s).
PATRON	\$10,000.00	Bronze plaque to be engraved with "PATRON", followed by one name and year.

Names of donors will be placed on brass plaques at the Interpretive Center facilities, and brochures describing the plaque program will be available. If your donations to the Committee have totalled \$2,500.00 or more, we will be contacting you in the next few months. If you would like to become part of this program, we would be delighted to have you participate.

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**INTRODUCING NEW FEATURE ARTICLE.** . . . .by Patty McLean. Patty has been with the Department of the Interior since 1966, joining the Bureau of Land Management in 1976, and has been the Area Manager of the Ridgecrest Resource Area for three years. We are delighted that she has agreed to contribute to Tortoise Tracks and we look forward to news "From The BLM Corner" in the future.

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#### FROM THE BLM CORNER

Thank You to all Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee members and other tortoise and turtle friends for the excellent attendance at the swearing-in ceremony for Ridgecrest's newest Ranger. Thanks also for the hard work donated during the fence repair party at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. November 1987 was truly a month for Thanksgiving due to your support and help.

We are now compiling BLM statistics on management of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area during Fiscal Year 1987 (October 1986 thru September 1987). I'll give a full report at the Annual Meeting in January but preview items include:

Approximately 6,000 people visited the Natural Area (based on around 2,000 recorded on the Visitor Registers). The average visit was two hours long.

Over sixty patrol checks by BLM staff were recorded on the Visitor Registers.

Four volunteer projects, in addition to the Preserve Committee's two fence parties, enabled substantive signing, more fence repairs, and repairs at the Kiosk area to be accomplished. These projects were done by the Boy Scouts and Ridgecrest's Multiple Use Coalition members, as well as several individuals who volunteer regularly to help the BLM manage public lands. Ridgecrest's volunteer "Volunteer Coordinator", Jerry Williams, and staff members Fred Coe, Jerry Boggs and Matt Dohlberg organized and helped with these projects.

New toilet doors for the Kiosk area were installed to replace those shot up beyond repair. Unfortunately, irresponsible unknown parties vandalized these also. The Boy Scout project repaired this second vandalism act.

The outlook for BLM's current fiscal year is very positive for the tortoise, although Congress has not yet passed the Interior Department Appropriations Act, by which BLM is funded. As Committee President Moncsko reported in the last newsletter, BLM anticipates approval of \$600,000 for acquisition of critical tortoise habitat within the Natural Area (\$500,000) and the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern (\$100,000). BLM State Director, Ed Hastey, has also asked for \$70,000 in challenge grant funds, if they are appropriated to the BLM. Challenge grant funds enable the government to match funds donated by the private sector - doubling every dollar you donate to help the tortoise! The third major potential benefit in FY 1988

From the BLM Corner, cont.

will be adding 20 new Rangers to the California Desert District. For the Ridgecrest Resource Area, this will mean 4 new Rangers and enable us to double our resource protection and law enforcement efforts by Fiscal Year 1989.

BLM is committed to tortoise habitat protection and recognizes it as a key part of our multiple-use mandate. We are very hopeful that our proposals for Fiscal Year 1988 will be authorized. They are a wonderful complement to the Preserve Committee's Lifeline Fund efforts. The Ridgecrest staff joins me in wishing you all a very Happy Holiday Season and a New Year to benefit the tortoise.

Patty McLean, Area Manager  
Ridgecrest Resource Area  
Bureau of Land Management

NATURAL AREA LAND PURCHASE AT TAX SALE

Friday, November 13, 1987, our financial supporters made it possible for us to purchase twenty more acres in Section 36 in the north-eastern part of the Natural Area. Our dedicated Beverly Steveson attended the Kern County Land Tax Sale - with cash in hand! The bidding went quickly from \$500.00 to \$1,300.00. The Committee is pleased with the parcel price of \$1,301.65!

1988 SPRING TOURS OF THE DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA

You're invited to visit the Natural Area at your convenience, study the information at the Interpretive Center, and follow the self-guiding nature trails. The Spring issue will include further information and helpful hints.

For groups wishing to participate in a guided tour on a week-end during the spring, the Committee will arrange for a guide. Tours during the week may also be possible. A group would ideally include about ten people but larger groups may be accommodated. Arrangements must be made in advance - and as far ahead as possible. Betty Forgey and Laura Stockton will be coordinating the tour schedule this year. Betty may be reached at (619) 762-6422 for information and reservations.

Open Tour Scheduled

Saturday, May 7th, is the date set for this year's "Open Tour" of the Natural Area. This provides an opportunity for those not affiliated with a group to enjoy the benefits of a guided tour. Reservations are required and may be arranged by writing to the Committee or by telephone: (619) 762-6422. Tour groups are limited in size - so plan ahead and make your reservations early.

Training Program For Volunteer Tour Guides Planned

Sunday, March 13th, has been set aside for training of new guides and offering our experienced guides an opportunity for reviewing their knowledge of the Natural Area. Laura Stockton will conduct the training session. Please contact her at (805) 831-2325 for information, if you're interested in participating.

DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA FENCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1987 Fall Fence Repair Party

On Saturday, November 21, 1987, twelve volunteers and Steve Smith of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) made 10 major repairs and 6 minor repairs on the perimeter fence of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. A number of signs were replaced, along with straightening many yards of fence and stabilizing gates. An additional sign (NO GRAZING) has been added along the west boundary.

Many thanks go to our three repair crews of Steve Smith (BLM), Warren Forgey, Laura Stockton, Dave and Mimi Loutrel, Marv Cornett, Ron and Mary Ann Henry, George Moncsko, Karle Mahler, Carol Panlaqui, Frank and Sally Richards and Bev Steveson.

Our large, new sign between the entrance and the kiosk has disappeared.

Fence Repair Summary

<u>Season</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Major Repairs</u>	<u>Added Comments</u>
Spring	1984	43	
Fall	1984	35	
Spring	1985	7	
Fall	1985	37	
Spring	1986	10	Modified entrance
Fall	1986	16	Removed car
Spring	1987	9	
Fall	1987	10	

In addition to major repairs many areas of fence are straightened, posts are reset and signs placed and/or replaced.

-Bev Steveson, Coordinator-

MOTORCYCLE GROUP TO ASSIST AT NATURAL AREA

Saturday, February 20th, and Sunday, February 21st

Join the members of the American Motorcycle Association's District 37 and the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and Bureau of Land Management staff on Saturday and Sunday, February 20th and 21st, for a special work party on the road and parking lot at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. The groups will place rocks along the edges of the access road and parking lot to define boundaries for vehicle travel and parking, in an attempt to protect adjacent vegetation and tortoise habitat. These areas have gradually been deteriorating, because visitors have driven and parked off the road and outside the parking lot. The boundary rocks should not only enhance the appearance of the area but better protect tortoise habitat.

THIS IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO MAKE A BIG STEP FORWARD TOGETHER!

We plan to meet at 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning and to have a campfire and program Saturday night to get better acquainted. Please call Bev Steveson at (805) 832-9121 or Carol Panlaqui at (619) 327-7785 if you can join us or need more information. Please let us know if you are going to come by February 18th.

THE CALIFORNIA TURTLE AND TORTOISE CLUB RALLIES TO AID THE LIFELINE FUND

Members of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club (C.T.T.C.) have once again demonstrated their support for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee by volunteering to help the Lifeline Fund in two "envelope stuffing parties", preparing packets of information to acquaint new people with the project.

On Saturday, November 21st, Inland Empire Chapter members Monica Altman, Rolland and Vicki Cory, Madeline Dexter, Vendy Hall, and friend Joyce Alta gathered at the home of chapter President, Jane Chavez-Scales, to prepare the remainder of 6,500 envelopes for mailing....Monica Altman and her husband, Jim (pressed into service while home from work ill), had already processed 3,000 on Thursday and Friday. On Sunday, the 22nd, Marc Graff of the Valley Chapter, Bob Crowder of the Foothill Chapter, and David Ortega of the Orange County Chapter, assembled at the home of Curtis Horton, Executive Director of the Lifeline Fund, to tackle the remaining 3,500.

A hearty "Thank You" to all of these willing helpers

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL TO HOST 13th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

The Desert Tortoise Council is a private, non-profit organization of biologists and lay-people from all walks of life who are united with the goal of assuring the continued survival of the desert tortoise in the wild throughout its range.

Plans are well underway for their Annual Symposium to be held Saturday and Sunday, March 26 and 27, 1988 at the Riverside Inn, Laughlin, Nevada. A field trip will follow on Monday, the 28th. Further information and reservation form may be obtained by writing to the Desert Tortoise Council, 5319 Cerritos Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90805.

CALENDAR

January 23, 1988	DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET See Page No. 3
February 20 and 21, 1988	WORK PARTY AT NATURAL AREA See Page No. 7
March 13, 1987	NATURAL AREA TOUR GUIDE TRAINING See Page No. 6
March 26, 27 and 28, 1988	DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL THIRTEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM See information above:
May 7, 1987	"OPEN TOUR" OF THE NATURAL AREA See Information in this issue



**RESERVATION FOR ANNUAL BANQUET**

Please make checks payable to the DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE, INC. and send to: Secretary, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.  
P.O. Box 453  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Checks must be received by Friday, January 15, 1988.

Please make a reservation for \_\_\_\_\_ person(s) in my name, for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Annual Banquet at Hodel's Buffet, Bakersfield, California, Saturday, January 23, 1988. I understand that the dinner will be \$8.50 per person, including tax, tip and beverage.

I am enclosing a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street or P.O. Box)

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION AFFILIATION (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

For your information and convenience, a vicinity map for the Annual Meeting and Banquet is provided below, along with information for three motels, all within a block of Hodel's.

Economy Inns of America  
Bakersfield #2 (North)  
6100 Knudsen Drive  
(Senior Citizen Discount)  
Reservations: (800) 826-0778

E-Z 8 Motel  
Bakersfield #2  
5200 Olive Tree Court  
Reservations: (805) 392-1511

Motel 6  
Bakersfield (North)  
5241 Olive Tree Court  
Reservations: (805) 392-9700

