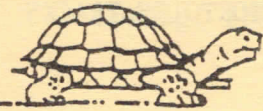


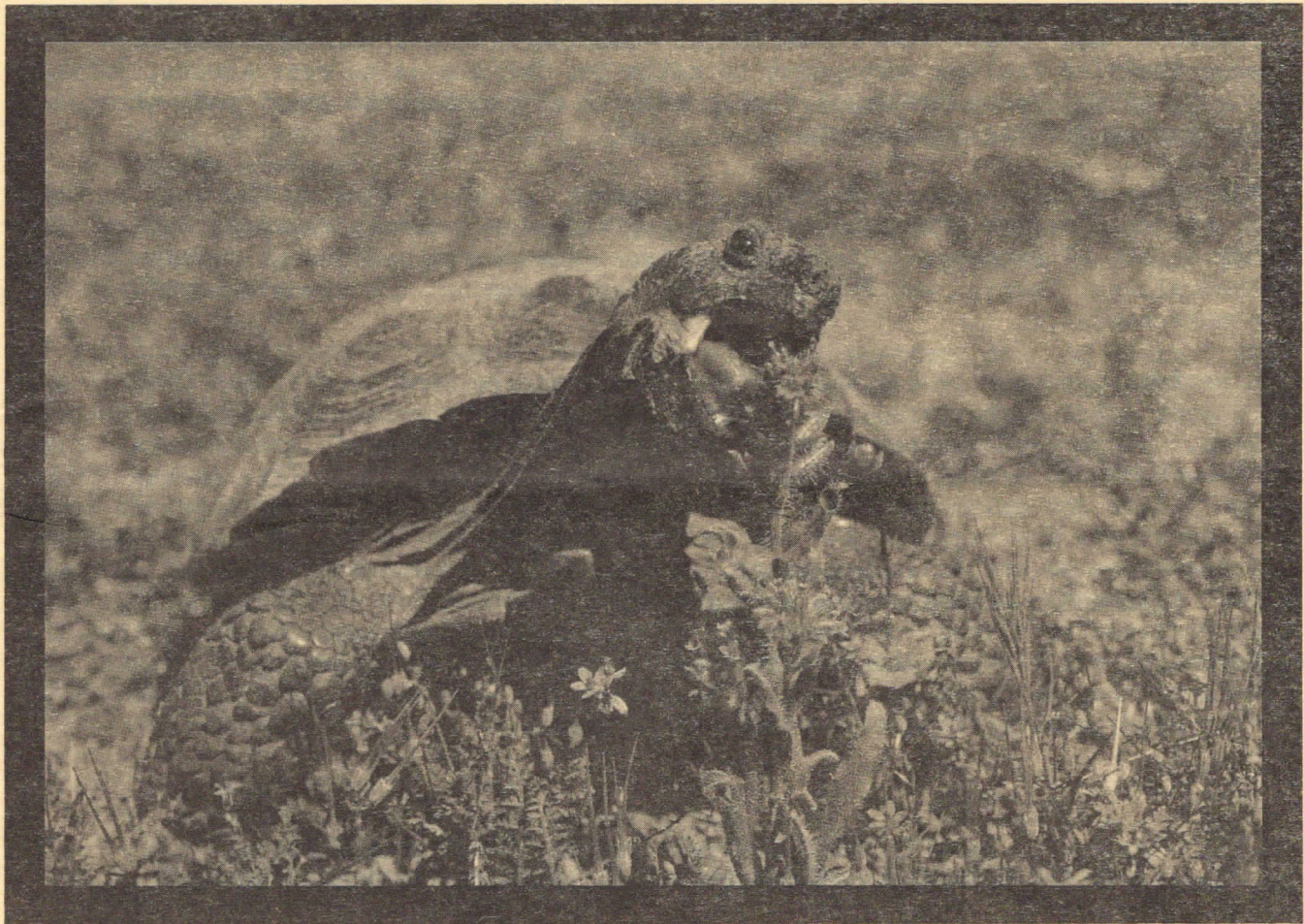
TORTOISE TRACKS



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

SPRING, 1988
Volume 9, No. 1

SPRING HAS ARRIVED
at the
DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA!



While the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee members and supporters are gaining momentum in their efforts for the tortoise, Nature is also lending a helping hand.....by providing a bountiful Spring harvest of vegetation. This year offers an exceptionally beautiful desert wildflower display to be enjoyed by both man and tortoise!

The above photograph - another award winner by our Bev Steveson - is now available on 7" x 5" note cards, furnished with envelopes...A beautiful all-occasion card to have on hand! Available thru our Products Chairman, Carol Panlaqui, 630 Plaza Amigo, Palm Springs, CA 92262, they are \$.60 each or 10 for \$5.00. (Include 6% tax + 20% shipping and handling when ordering.)

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

The Committee extends a warm welcome to the hundreds of new members and donors who have responded so generously to our Desert Tortoise Lifeline Fund appeal. And...Thank You to the many renewing members as well. As you can see from the other articles in this newsletter, you have joined us at a time of major progress in desert tortoise protection. Years of dedicated work by Committee members are paying off for the desert tortoise, and your support is helping make a big difference.

Our success is founded on the energy and commitment of the many volunteers who have been so generous with their time and talent. We encourage you to become involved and share the rewards of camaraderie and accomplishment. The opportunities include responding to calls for letters on current issues, joining the bi-annual fence and trail repair parties at the Natural Area, and attending the Annual Meeting and Banquet.

For those wishing to make a larger commitment of their time to the work of the Committee, "Active Membership" may be applied for and requires approval by the Board of Trustees. Communications, Government Affairs, Stewardship, Fundraising, Tours, and Publicity are just some of the areas where help is always needed.

A perfect opportunity for you to find out what the Committee is all about, and to meet other supporters, is the Open Tour day at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. Expert Committee members conduct guided tours of the Natural Area throughout the spring for organized groups. Saturday, May 7th, is the "Open Tour" date set aside for those not visiting with a group to enjoy a guided tour. Reservations are required and may be arranged with Betty Forgey - see TOUR-ist Information on the following page. Tour groups are limited in size, so make your reservations early to be sure you don't miss out on this fascinating look at what you've helped to preserve. Those especially interested in seeing the beautiful wildflower display expected this year, and planning to visit the Natural Area on their own, should know that the blooming season will be early this year, peaking in late March or early April.

DESERT RANGER PROTECTS DESERT TORTOISE HABITAT
ON THE CHUCKWALLA BENCH AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

John Blachley, a Desert Ranger for the Bureau of Land Management's Indio Area Office, is helping to protect desert tortoise habitat in the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern. In January of 1988, John stopped a vehicle owner to check the registration and noticed brush in the undercarriage of the vehicle. Suspecting that the driver had been travelling off-road, John followed the tracks and visited the camp. He found fresh, green vegetation in the campfire ring and vehicle tracks off-road. The person was cited and fined for destruction of natural features.

Congratulations, John, for helping to protect important desert tortoise habitat!

TOUR-ist Information for the DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA

YOU ARE INVITED to visit the Natural Area and participate in a guided tour!

Tour Guides will be available to groups of 10 or more, provided arrangements are made in advance.

Call Betty Forgey (619) 762-6422 to book a tour...or write P.O. Box 307, Boron, California 93516.

April and May are typically the best months for wildflower appreciation and opportunity to observe tortoises above ground.....but prime time may occur earlier this year.

Weekday tours are acceptable. Booking for weekend tours should be made as soon as possible - there are limitations on the number of tours available on the weekends.

May 7th is the date set for this year's "Open Tour". The Committee will attempt to accommodate as many small groups and individuals as possible on that date.

Tour participants should assemble at the parking lot no later than 8:45 a.m. Most tours last approximately two hours. (By late May tours should start by 8 a.m. if the days are especially hot. You will be advised.)

Participants MUST:

- Wear sturdy shoes - no open toes, no thongs.
- Be able to walk over sandy terrain for approximately two miles.
- Not bring dogs onto the Natural Area.
- Keep small children under surveillance at all times.

Participants MAY:

- Carry drinking water.
- Wear a sunhat and use suntan lotion.
- Carry a camera and/or binoculars.
- Expect to need a sweater or windbreaker early in the day. Weather can be capricious.

You may encounter other reptiles such as the Mojave green rattlesnake. Tour guides will advise precautions.

DIRECTIONS: Approximately one mile after you pass the Lakeshore Inn on the Mojave-Randsburg Road, you will leave the paved road and drive to the left onto a dirt road. Proceed approximately five more miles until you see the Desert Tortoise Natural Area sign - turn left to the entrance of the Natural Area and continue on to the Interpretive Center and parking area.

Betty Forgey,
Tour Coordinator

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

The attendance at our annual corporate meeting in January was the largest ever. The turnout by the membership and interested conservation organizations to hear what your Board of Trustees has been doing and participating in discussions is gratifying. I think it shows a maturing of the organization and an increased interest in helping the tortoise populations in the wild. Following that meeting, Laura Stockton and Bev Steveson put together another fine dinner, awards presentation package, and speakers. My thanks to Mr. Gerald Hillier, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Desert District Manager, and Mr. Rick Hewitt, Manager of The Nature Conservancy San Juaquin Valley Project Office for updating us on recent actions in their offices. A special thanks goes to Dr. Tony Recht, Professor at California State University Dominguez Hills, who presented a wonderfully entertaining and informative program on the Mohave Ground Squirrel. Thanks to all the people who attended and showed such interest in our progress.

The BLM organized a Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA) work party in February, which was very successful! It was a joint effort of the BLM, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, American Motor Cycle Association (AMA) and Izaak Walton League. You will read the results elsewhere. I want to thank Patty McLean, BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area Manager, her personnel, Dana Bell of the AMA District 37, and Walt Walters and George Duffield of the Izaak Walton League for organizing a productive work party. The DTNA shows marked improvements as you will see when you visit. This event demonstrates that groups with diverse interests can come together on specific projects to aid conservation. I'd like to see more future cooperative projects such as this.

We also are reaching what looks like final agreement on mitigation and compensation for two projects effecting tortoise habitat. In a Searles Valley cogeneration plant sponsored by Kerr-McGee Corp., \$25,000 will be paid for land acquisition in the DTNA. The second project is a proposed vehicle test track in Cantil, adjoining the DTNA in the northwest portion. We have set a good precedent in Kern County for a desert mitigation package on this project. As approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA), it includes three options for land acquisition which is expected to result in up to 2 sections of new land in or adjacent to the DTNA, a stringent noise mitigation requirement to protect tortoise on the DTNA, fencing of the project, tortoise relocation and other requirements for tortoise protection. We also wanted included a research study to determine actual project noise impacts on the tortoise with further noise reductions if found harmful, but that was not approved. There is an appeal of BZA decision by a local landowner, so we will have to wait and see what comes after that. Dr's. Kristin Berry and Bayard Brattstrom worked very hard to identify and document the noise impacts and work on mitigation proposals with the County and the applicant. My thanks to them for the significant quantity and quality of work which was instrumental in getting this mitigation package through.

One last item from me, I'd like to thank Mr. Curtis Horton, Betty Forgey, Assemblyman Robert Campbell (who hosted the conference in Sacramento) and all the public agency people who assisted them in the successful kick off of the Committees' Lifeline Fund. The press conferences in Los Angeles and Sacramento were well attended and we received wonderful press coverage. Curtis has a full agenda of follow up events to keep the program going. We have already received tremendous response from our members and new members, plus one grant has been received and several others are coming along nicely. If you have not yet responded to this project, please.....Now is the time!

Notes From the President, cont.

In closing, spring has arrived on the desert and the wild flowers are blooming on the Natural Area. The tortoise are out and I invite all of you to visit. Come see the improvements made recently, enjoy the interpretive trails or just wander out into the desert to explore for plants and animals. Please follow the precautions for desert outings, don't disturb the "critters" living there, and have fun. It's for the enjoyment of all.

George Moncsko, President

AWARDS PRESENTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

GOLDEN TORTOISE

JOY LANE, Assistant District Attorney, Narcotics Division, Kern County.

BOB GOODRICH, an attorney in private practice in San Bernardino.

Joy and Bob have contributed time, expertise and personal resources in pursuing the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee lawsuit against the State Lands Commission from 1982 thru 1987.

SPECIAL APPRECIATION (Awarded to past Active Members)

CHARLOTTE GOULD. Charlotte was instrumental in the formation of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee beginning in 1972 and served as a member of the Board of Trustees. She developed the first Committee brochure and several revisions. Charlotte has also contributed many years of substantial financial support to the Committee.

GLORIA NOWAK. Gloria became involved with the Committee in 1974 and has served as Corresponding Secretary, Publicity Chairman, and Editor of "Tortoise Tracks" from its inception until last year. Gloria is continuing to work for the tortoise in many ways since her "retirement" from the Board.

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

TOM LANGTON. Tom is with the Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, based in London, England, and is helping the Committee work toward international support and recognition of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee's efforts.

MIMI LOUTREL.....MARV CORNETT.....DAVID DARBY

Mimi, Marv and David have missed few work parties since the Committee began its fence repair efforts and are also continuing substantial financial supporters.

KARLE MAHLER.....whose help has been appreciated in fence patrol and repair activities.

JIM MELLI.....for his graphic art work on the new logo.

STEVE SMITH. Steve, with the Ridgecrest Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management, has faithfully lent his support and assistance on the Committee's fence monitoring and repair projects.

MEMBERS OF AMERICAN MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION and IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE
CONDUCT MAJOR FACE-LIFT OF INTERPRETIVE CENTER FACILITIES

On February 20, members of American Motorcycle Association's District 37 and the Izaak Walton League joined with the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and Bureau of Land Management to work at the Natural Area. The weather was great and a few tortoises were basking at burrow entrances as over 60 people broke into groups to work on several projects. One group spread gravel in the parking lot and placed railroad ties to mark parking sites, while another collected large granitic rocks from a nearby outcrop to line the edges of the parking area. At the same time, a small crew removed annual plants from the center of the main interpretive trail and another group carried 60 interpretive trail posts to the three interpretive loops and placed them in the ground. The 60 posts will serve as directional markers for the trails.

A large group of about 15 people assembled at the site of a mining scoop, where a bulldozer had scraped a shallow depression many years ago. With about three hours of shovelling and recontouring, the disturbance is now barely visible. Still other workers repaired the fence and placed large directional signs near the entry to the interpretive facilities.

After lunch, everyone assembled to clean up parts of the western boundary of the Natural Area. In a few hours, a pick up truck was piled with old furniture, garbage, spent ammunition, and clay pigeons. We were finished by late afternoon...several hours sooner than expected.

The project was highly successful and all participants felt that the Natural Area looked much better. Special Thanks are due to Dana Bell of District 37 American Motorcycle Association, who arranged for more than 33 people to attend. Representatives from CORVA News and the California Enduro Association were present, as well as members of the following motorcycle clubs: Badgers, Checkpoint, Desert Foxes, Dirt Diggers, Ridgecrest, Shamrocks, Spokebenders, Training Wheels, and Ventura County. Walt Walters and George Duffield of the Izaak Walton League and their friends and family also attended. The Bureau of Land Management was represented by Area Manager Patty McLean, new Tortoise Ranger John Kalish, Kristin Berry, Steve Smith, Mark Struble, Fred Coe, Colleen Hewson, and Tamara Greaves. Members of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee who contributed time and effort included Warren and Betty Forgey, Mimi Loutrell and Marv Cornett, Ed Fleming, Bob Loomis, George Moncsko, Carol Panlaqui, the Sheppards, Bev Steveson and Laura Stockton. George Sheppard and family represented the Desert Tortoise Council. Reporters from the Daily Independent and Bakersfield Californian were on hand to record this first-time event.

We wish to again express our thanks to the many people who took the weekend to help out and to get acquainted with each other. We would like to make this an annual effort. Next year we may wish to focus on a Russian thistle problem on the west side. Again, Thank you all!

Kristin Berry

MEMORIAL DONATION RECEIVED

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee has received a special \$100 donation from the Foothill Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club

In Memory of Longtime Member Jim Hunter

FROM THE BLM CORNER

Greetings to all Committee Members. Good news to report since the last newsletter!

Congress passed and the President signed the Interior Department FY 1988 Appropriations Bill late in December. The bill included \$600,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for tortoise habitat acquisition at the Bureau of Land Management's Desert Tortoise Natural Area (\$500,000) and Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern (\$100,000).

BLM issued letters of interest to purchase land to approximately 20 landowners within the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA) in late February. This is the first step in our land acquisition procedures. Meetings were held in February with representatives of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, The Nature Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Game, and BLM to coordinate land acquisition efforts at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA). The Indio Resource Area has begun negotiations to acquire a large parcel at Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Contracts were awarded by the BLM's California Desert District for four tortoise trend plot analyses during FY 88. The plots are as follows:

Shadow Valley - San Bernardino County
Chuckwalla Bench - San Bernardino County
Chemehuevi Valley - San Bernardino County
DTNA Section 11 - Kern County

As mentioned elsewhere in the Newsletter, the DTNA Kiosk area was improved considerably thanks to significant volunteer efforts. Approximately 75 people from the Preserve Committee, American Motorcycle Association (District 37), California Off-Road Vehicle Association, Izaak Walton League, BLM, and interested individuals contributed 600 hours of service at an estimated value of \$3,000. Road grading and gravel for the parking lot were donated by Desert Construction, Inc. of Victorville, California with a value of \$2,000. Bertrand Trucking of Ridgecrest donated \$2,500 worth of services hauling gravel to the DTNA. The Trona Railroad of Trona, California donated 40 railroad ties to use in the center of the parking area.

Members of the High Desert Multiple Use Coalition and the Gear Grinders ORV Club contributed approximately 50 work-hours of service at the DTNA at a value of \$250 on February 21, 1988. They installed and/or replaced 155 signs around the north and west boundaries.

Emergency restrictions on public land in the West Rand Mountains and Fremont Valley areas of the Ridgecrest Resource Area will go into effect in the next two months. Emergency measures under consideration are: Limiting off-road vehicle use to designated signed routes only, except for authorized mining or ORV events from July 1 to February 28; no shooting except for licensed upland game hunting from October thru January; no camping, start or pit areas for competitive ORV events; and, no surface disturbing activities from March 1 to June 30. These actions are being considered in response to BLM studies showing severe tortoise population declines in the area. The emergency actions will remain in effect until completion of the West Rand-Fremont Valley management plan.

From The BLM Corner, cont.

The Ridgecrest Resource Area will prepare a draft management plan for the West Rand Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern and the adjacent Fremont Valley area by September 1988. Public scoping meetings will be held to identify key issues. We also plan to establish a technical review team of interested parties in the private sector to provide recommendations on needed management actions. More details will be provided in future issues of the Newsletter. A Preserve Committee representative will be an integral part of this effort. Completion of the plan is anticipated in 1989.

The California Desert District is in the process of hiring 20 additional rangers. The Ridgecrest Resource Area will have three new rangers by May 1 and a fourth by July.

Dr. Kristin Berry from the California Desert District is managing a \$43,000 contract study for validating the tortoise habitat model, developing a tortoise growth rate model, studying tortoise shell-shapes, and statistical analyses of data from the tortoise trend plots. The funds for this work were contributed by the California Department of Fish and Game.

Dr. Berry is also managing a contract for \$22,500 to study raven densities and raven predation data. This money was also contributed to BLM by the California Department of Fish and Game.

Sheep grazing permits will be issued by the Ridgecrest and Barstow Resource Areas for staggering dates starting in early March in other than highly crucial tortoise habitat. We have begun tortoise emergence studies in highly crucial tortoise habitat areas and expect to issue grazing permits in these areas as early as March 15. Forage studies indicate production over 1000 lbs. per acre in many areas, far in excess of the minimum 350 lbs. per acre required by the Desert Plan. Increased monitoring efforts are planned to assure that grazing permittees use only authorized areas.

Hope you find this information helpful. See you next newsletter.

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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

Our newest board member is Mrs. Jayne L. Chavez-Scales of Redlands, California, where she shares her home with her son, Zachariah. She is a Kindergarten teacher for the San Bernardino City Unified School District. Her interest in tortoises began in 1979 when one of her students gave her "Mr. T.", a captive male tortoise. This "gift" stimulated her interest in the preservation of the of the desert tortoise.

Jayne has a B.A. in sociology and a M.A. in Education from California State University, San Bernardino. She is currently the President of the Inland Empire Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club and is also a member of the Desert Tortoise Council, Tort-Group, the New York Turtle and Tortoise Society and the Desert Protection League.

COMMITTEE PRESS CONFERENCES ATTRACT WIDE COVERAGE

To officially kick off the new Desert Tortoise Lifeline Fund campaign and build public interest and support, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee called two press conferences, one in Los Angeles on January 26th and one in Sacramento on February 2nd. Organized by Curtis Horton, Director of the Lifeline Fund, the press briefings featured Betty Forgey, founding President and currently a Trustee, as spokeswoman for the Committee.

As many members have noted, news coverage was excellent. In Los Angeles, at least five local TV news programs carried the story, on KCBS, KNBC, KABC, KMEX (Spanish International Network), and a Japanese language station, Channel 56. At least six area radio stations featured it, and Associated Press wire service and radio picked it up for national distribution. Newspaper coverage was also very good, highlighted by a long article in the Los Angeles Times, and a subsequent editorial, reprinted in this newsletter.

Media coverage around the state included San Diego, Bakersfield, and San Francisco TV stations, and newspapers such as the Sacramento Bee, Fresno Bee, and a front page story in the Bakersfield Californian. National coverage is impossible to gauge accurately, but one example is an extensive feature in the Anchorage Daily News.

Patty McLean, Ridgecrest Resource Area Manager for the Bureau of Land Management, joined Betty and Curtis for the Los Angeles press conference. Also in attendance were Walter Allen and Martha Young-Wheeler of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club. Committee member Mimi Loutrel and Patty kindly provided an excellent live tortoise exhibit...the key to good TV coverage.

In Sacramento, Bill Grenfell, Department of Fish and Game Non-Game Program Manager, and Assemblyman Robert Campbell both participated in the press conference at the Capitol. Richard Johnson and Buzz Kennedy from the state headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management also attended. Cindy Williams, Assemblyman Campbell's Chief of Staff, and other members of his staff were of great assistance in making arrangements for the Sacramento press briefing. Richard Spotts, California Representative of Defenders of Wildlife, generously provided advice and information, as well. A live exhibit was organized by Felice Rood and Roma Coppel of the Sacramento Turtle and Tortoise Club. Roma's tortoise, Old Tex, is now probably the most famous desert tortoise alive!

Many thanks to all who helped make these events so successful! Everyone who participated can take a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that we reached more people than ever before with the message that the desert tortoise needs the public's help and that the Committee can provide that help with their support. We will be reporting the important results of this publicity to you in upcoming newsletters.

\$100,000 GRANT MARKS BIG START OF NEW YEAR FOR LIFELINE FUND

No sooner had Betty Forgey and I returned from our successful February 2nd Sacramento press conference than I received word that the California Environmental License Plate Fund, administered by the Resources Agency of California, has approved a grant of \$100,000 for land acquisition at the Natural Area. The Legislature is expected to ratify it for inclusion in the final state budget this June. The grant is a response to our request for \$101,000 to be used for purchase of the remaining western boundary parcels so that the

\$100,000 Grant, cont.

protective fence may be completed there. The Resources Agency decision indicates that the urgency of desert tortoise conservation and protection of the Natural Area is increasingly being recognized at the state level.

Another welcome sign of concern in Sacramento comes from state Senator Dan McCorquodale, Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife. Following the recent press coverage, Senator McCorquodale expressed his enthusiastic support of our efforts in a letter to the Committee, and he has expressed his concern to the Director of the Department of Fish and Game, Pete Bontadelli, inquiring what the state is doing to insure protection of the desert tortoise.

With the increasing sensitivity of state legislators and agencies to this issue, your support is more important than ever to make sure further action is taken in Sacramento this year, such as state listing of the tortoise as threatened.

In other fundraising news, the Lifeline Fund has received the Committee's first contribution from a private foundation, the Heller Charitable and Educational Fund. The Heller Fund's \$2,000 grant is an important milestone in our efforts to broaden support for the Committee's work. We are very grateful for the Heller Fund's trailblazing assistance and for their appreciation of the urgency and wide benefits of the Committee's projects.

Curtis Horton

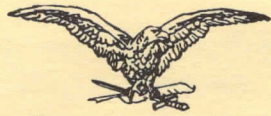
A Special Message to our California Members

California's Endangered Species -
H E L P T H E M S U R V I V E W I T H L I N E 4 5

As a supporter of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, you are helping to support values that seek to maintain the health of living systems in our world. At tax time you can help in another important way.....When you prepare your state tax returns this year, you can fill in Line 45 and make a voluntary, and deductible, contribution to the California Rare and Endangered Species Preservation Program. This program - devoted exclusively to species and habitat preservation - is administered by the Department of Fish and Game. It is entirely funded by contributions made on Line 45. (Note: In previous years contributions were made on Line 90.)

There are 252 California species - including mammals, birds, plants and marine life - that are officially classified as rare, threatened or endangered by the state. Started in 1983, the Line 45 Program has already helped a wide variety of species, including the bald eagle, the island and kit foxes, the pregrine falcon, the sea otter, the desert tortoise and dozens of other native plants and animals.

Your contribution is deductible on state AND federal itemized returns, so it helps you too. This year at tax time, please give whatever you feel you can afford. Even the smallest contributions add up to a great deal of good for the critters!



Los Angeles Times

A Times Mirror Newspaper

Publishers

HARRISON GRAY OTIS, 1882-1917

HARRY CHANDLER, 1917-1944

NORMAN CHANDLER, 1944-1960

OTIS CHANDLER, 1960-1980

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The Tortured Tortoise

The desert tortoise may not be one of the more glamorous or romantic of nature's creatures, but it is an important inhabitant of the vast arid regions of the Southwest. The tortoise is the California state reptile, is designated by the state as a protected species and is proposed for the national list of threatened or endangered species.

None of these protective devices have offered much protection for the tortoise, however. The tortoise population is declining in the California desert in alarming numbers, as staff writer Larry Stammer reported in last Tuesday's editions of *The Times*. The decimation is particularly distressing in portions of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area established in 1980. "We're losing the species in the wild. In the Southwest the tortoise is in trouble," said Glenn Stewart, a zoology professor at Cal Poly Pomona who is the chairman of the Desert Tortoise Council.

Some help is on the way. The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee has initiated a campaign to raise \$2.5 million to acquire 9.5 square miles of privately owned property within the natural area. The federal Bureau of Land Management, which now administers much of the California desert region, has budgeted another \$500,000. The California Department of Fish and Game also has joined in the land-acquisition campaign.

None of these actions are likely to stop the senseless decimation of the tortoise population, which has plummeted 90% in the last 50 years and has declined as much as 50% in the past decade. Many of the tortoises have been shot. Others are

taken by poachers or run over by off-road vehicles. In some areas the tortoise population is suffering because livestock compete for the grass on which tortoises subsist. The tortoise is doing best in remote wild areas untouched by human visitors and development.

The loss of the tortoise can have a widespread effect on the general desert environment, scientists say. The tortoises provide food for the desert kit fox, coyote, bobcat, golden eagle and raven. Snakes, lizards and rodents use tortoise burrows for shelter. The burrowing owl uses the holes for nesting. Kristin H. Berry, a wildlife biologist for the Bureau of Land Management, said, "If we take care of the desert lands to keep the tortoise alive, we'll be taking care of most other species."

The plight of the tortoise is an indication of what can happen to the entire desert unless it is offered greater protection and unless the public uses it with more respect and care. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should accelerate efforts to place the tortoise on the list of threatened or endangered species. And the tortoise problem should add impetus to the desert parks and wilderness bill of Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.).

The need for wilderness is not just to preserve an area for the fun of a few elitist backpackers, as critics often claim, but to save fragile and delicate regions in their natural state from overuse and development for future generations to appreciate and study. The decline of the desert tortoise is a dramatic example of this need in the California desert now.

CALENDAR

March 26, 27 and 28, 1988

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL
THIRTEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
Laughlin, Nevada

May 7, 1988

"OPEN TOUR" OF THE NATURAL AREA
See Information in this issue

April 24, 1988

CALIFORNIA TURTLE and TORTOISE CLUB
ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER
12th ANNUAL TURTLE and TORTOISE SHOW
Martin Recreation Center
Harbor Blvd. at La Palma Ave.
Anaheim, California
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Jean Jones, Editor

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