



Desert Tortoise
Preserve Committee, Inc.

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Tortoise Tracks

Newsletter



**Desert Tortoise Research
Natural Area**

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS



Desert tortoises at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, Spring 2023. Photos in this issue courtesy of Caroline Champlin

DTPC's Spring Naturalist Program – Enhancing the DTRNA Visitor Experience for 34 Years

With much-appreciated funding and logistical support from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ridgecrest Field Office, the DTPC completed another very successful naturalist season in 2023. In partnership with the BLM, DTPC has staffed the DTRNA Interpretive Center with trained naturalists every spring since 1989. For 34 years, the naturalist program has been DTPC's most visible and impactful educational outreach activity. The naturalists significantly enhance the DTRNA visitor experience – leading scheduled tours, sharing their knowledge of the desert with individual visitors, selling fundraising merchandise, and collecting valuable visitation data. They also provide essential support to DTPC's stewardship mission by monitoring human activity at the Interpretive Center during the peak visitation season and completing routine sign and trail maintenance.



This year Freya Reder served as the full-time Naturalist and Caroline Champlin who served as the part-time Naturalist. Freya Reder had previously served as the full-time Naturalist in 2013. Together, Freya and Caroline staffed the Interpretive Center seven days a week between March 19 and June 4. During the 76 days the Naturalists were on site, 330 groups totaling 716 individuals were recorded at the Interpretive Center. This year's visitors stayed an average of 90 minutes. While over 80% of visitors came from within California, others came from at least 17 additional states and 11 different countries.

With the record rainfall in early 2023, visitors to the DTNRA this spring were treated to an extraordinary wildflower bloom and abundant wildlife. The Naturalists recorded observations of at least seven individual desert tortoises, including one hatchling and one sub-adult tortoise, within the vicinity of the Interpretive Center and the DTRNA trails. Just over 25% of this year's visitors reported seeing at least one tortoise. Significantly, no attempts to collect wild tortoises or to release pet tortoises were witnessed during the naturalist season.



Dedicated to the recovery and conservation of the Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and other rare and endangered species inhabiting the Mojave and western Sonoran deserts.

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.
Founded 1974

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Tortoise Tracks is published four times a year.

RIGHT (TOP TO BOTTOM):
Mojave patchnose snake
(*Salvadora hexalepis mojavensis*)

Desert candles
(*Caulanthus inflatus*)

Long-nosed leopard lizard
(*Gambelia wislizenii*)



DTPC Awarded State Grant for DTRNA Restoration Work

We are excited to announce that the DTPC has been awarded a \$271,285 grant from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) division. This money will directly support essential stewardship activities at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA) and adjacent DTRNA Expansion Areas.

The funding – which will be disbursed to DTPC over the next three years as project milestones are completed – is part of the OHMR's 2023 Grant (G23) funding cycle. DTPC's successful G23 application was prepared by Jun Lee, DTPC's Land Acquisition Director and Interim Executive Director. DTPC has previously received funding under the OHMVR's 2017 and 2019 grant cycles.

The OHMVR Grants Program is a competitive annual funding opportunity that provides for well managed off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation in California by providing financial assistance to eligible agencies and organizations that develop, maintain, operate, expand, support, or contribute to well managed high-quality OHV recreation areas, roads and trails. ***Very importantly, the Grants Program also funds organizations that protect wildlife, soils, and habitat in areas affected by OHV recreation.***

The DTPC is an excellent fit for the Grants Program based on our longstanding involvement with stewardship and restoration activities at the DTRNA. The DTRNA attracts significant interest and support from OHV recreationists. In 2019, 9% of groups and 16% of individuals visiting the DTRNA were associated with OHV activities. OHV-related visitation peaked in 2020, when 24% of groups and 32% of individuals arrived at the DTRNA by OHV or indicated OHV recreation in the area. In 2021, 10% of groups and 15% of individual DTRNA visitors were associated with OHV activities. In 2022, 9% of groups and 13% of individual DTRNA visitors were connected to OHV use.

DTPC's G23 funding will be used to remediate OHV impacts to the DTRNA and DTRNA Expansion Area including:

- monitoring and repairing fence breaks;
- monitoring and removing invasive plant species;
- restoring habitat for the desert tortoise and other sensitive species through vertical and horizontal mulching;
- cleaning trash;
- installing signs to minimize illegal trespass and the use of illegal trails and routes;
- providing alternative route maps for OHV users using trails around the DTRNA and Expansion Areas; and
- providing public education opportunities at the DTRNA Interpretive Center and nature trails.

About OHMVR

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation program was created in 1971 out of the critical need to better manage growing demands for off-highway recreation, while at the same time foster respect for private property rights and protect California's natural and cultural resources. Today, this program, a division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, is the largest and most successful program of its type in the U.S. The program continues its commitment to provide safe, enjoyable recreation while balancing the need to protect the state's resources.

In addition to providing accessibility to off-highway recreation for everyone from hikers to bikers to bird watchers, the program provides a variety of services and benefits to California's residents and visitors, including resource management of state lands, wildlife habitat protection, youth development and law enforcement.

Program funding comes from fuel taxes which are attributable to the recreational use of vehicles off highway, off-highway vehicle registration fees and fees collected at State Vehicular Recreation Areas.

Since the advent of the OHMVR Grants Program in 1974, grant awardees have received more than \$740 million statewide.

Here's what DTPC will accomplish with the G23 OHV Grant

| Activity | Project Deliverable Description |
|---|---|
| Monitoring/Patrol | Conduct site-specific surveys of 5,400 acres of DTPC's conservation lands in and around the DTRNA and landscape surveys of 25,280 acres of habitat within the DTRNA. Surveys will focus on invasive plant occurrences, illegal trespass, fence breaks, and OHV use within the interior of protected lands. |
| Signage | Install and maintain 250 restoration signs and 250 no trespass signs along a total of 50 linear miles of perimeter fencing surrounding the DTRNA and the DTNRA expansion areas where DTPC owns and manages conservation lands for the desert tortoise and other sensitive species. Monitor conditions each month. |
| Fencing/Barriers | Repair and maintain a total of 50 linear miles of perimeter fencing surrounding the DTRNA and the DTRNRA expansion areas where DTPC owns and manages conservation lands for the desert tortoise and other sensitive species. Conduct monthly fence monitoring. |
| Public Outreach/ Visitor Services | Provide interpretive services to OHV and public visitors, guided nature walks on trails within the DTNRA, and provide OHV safety and OHV maps for OHV recreationists to ensure compliance with approved OHV trails. |
| Scientific and Cultural Studies Relating to OHV Recreation and its Impacts | Botanist will conduct studies and prepare report on the project design, effectiveness of restoration activities, OHV road impacts along linear impact areas as well as spillover effects on the interior of protected areas. |
| Restoration Planning | Create and update ArcGIS-based field maps of entire project area. The field maps will be used by monitoring crews and staff to document the condition of restoration areas, identify fence breaks and sign replacement requirements, and pinpoint invasive plant species occurrences for removal. |
| Other Restoration Activities | Install vertical and horizontal mulching and remove trash and debris each spring/summer of the three years of the restoration project period. During active restoration, update field maps and photo monitoring data on DTPC's ArcGIS platform. |

Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area Fall Work Party

Date: October 14, 2023, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Details: Join the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) and the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Ridgecrest Field Office as we celebrate the Mojave Desert Tortoise on October 14th.

Trifecta: The work party is part of the BLM's National Public Lands Day (see facing page for more information), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Desert Tortoise Week 2023, and the DTPC annual Fall Work party.



Activities: Roll up your sleeves for a hands-on experience in repairing fences and signs along the Natural Area's perimeter fence, protecting pristine desert tortoise habitat, and maintaining our interpretive trails and kiosk. Explore our 3 interpretive trails to understand the rich and complex plant and animal species that call the Natural Area home.

Partial Eclipse Bonus: Early birds will be treated with an opportunity to see a Partial Eclipse.

Contact: Find more information at WWW.TORTOISE-TRACKS.ORG, call (442)294-4258, or email us at DTPC.PRESERVE.MANAGER@TORTOISE-TRACKS.ORG

Location: Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area Interpretive Kiosk, near California City, California. Please contact us for directions.



**SPECIAL INVITATION TO
CELEBRATE NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY AT
THE DESERT TORTOISE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA
Saturday, October 14, 2023. 9:00 am to 3:00 pm**

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management's Ridgecrest Field Office, are celebrating National Public Lands Day on October 14, 2023 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA).

[National Public Lands Day](#) (NPLD) is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer event for public lands. Since 1994, National Public Lands Day has brought together hundreds of thousands of volunteers to help restore America's public lands. BLM's National Public Lands Day information can be found at: [BLM PUBLIC LANDS DAY WEBSITE](#)

This year volunteers will be treated with an opportunity to see a **Partial Eclipse at the DTRNA**. In the U.S., the annular solar eclipse begins in Oregon at 9:13 a.m. PDT and ends in Texas at 12:03 p.m. CDT. Read more about the eclipse on NASA's website: [NASA 2023 ECLIPSE TRACKER](#)

SUPPORT THE DTRNA ON THIS SPECIAL DAY BY:

- Repairing fences and signs along the DTRNA perimeter fence
- Removing trash from habitat on which desert tortoises, Mohave ground squirrels, and other species depend
- Maintaining our interpretative trails and kiosk
- Enjoying the pristine conservation lands at the DTRNA!

REGISTER BY:

- Emailing your interest to DTPC.Preserve.Manager@Tortoise-tracks.org
- Mailing your registration to DTPC, P.O. Box 940, Ridgecrest, CA 93556
- Calling our Preserve Manager at (442)294-4258

REGISTRATION

- o **YES!** I plan to attend the Public Lands Day Celebration at the DTRNA
- o I **MAY** attend the Event. Please remind me closer to the event.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email Address: _____ Telephone: _____



Tortoise Tracks

THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE
PO BOX 940
RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA 93556

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If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy, notify us
by email at dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org

DTPC MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION FORM

1. YES, I want to help save the threatened desert tortoise and its habitat! Here is my tax-deductible membership contribution of:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$400 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Benefactor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2000 Life/Corporate |

2. My membership is current but here is an additional donation of \$_____. Please use it for:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Acquisition | <input type="checkbox"/> Where Most Needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

3. I'd like to help you grow the DTPC Permanent Endowment. Please accept an additional donation of:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$_____ |

Marketable Securities (Stock): Contact DTPC Investment Chairperson, Greg Lathrop at 2redgrey@gmail.com or (415) 637-7187 for assistance

Let's grow the Permanent Endowment!

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like my contribution to remain anonymous | <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to receive <i>Tortoise Tracks</i> electronically (please provide email address) |
|---|--|

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Please make your check payable to **DTPC** and mail to:

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee
PO Box 940
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Thank you.

*All contributors receive the Tortoise Tracks newsletter. The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is an IRS recognized tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Contributions and/or annual membership dues are tax-deductible, to the extent allowable by law. Contributor information is kept confidential and is not disclosed to third parties.

If you would like to renew your membership or donate online, please visit
* www.tortoise-tracks.org *