

The Desert Tortoise Council Newsletter Winter 1996

OUR 21st YEAR

Our Goal: To assure the continued survival of viable populations of the desert tortoise throughout its range

21st SYMPOSIUM ANNOUNCEMENT

The 21st Desert Tortoise Council Meeting and Symposium will be held on March 29-31, 1996, at Sam's Town in Las Vegas, Nevada. A field trip is scheduled for Monday, April 1, 1996, following the symposium. Sam's Town is at 5111 Boulder Highway near Flamingo Road. 150 rooms have been blocked for the event from March 28 to April 2. Rooms **MUST** be reserved 30 days prior to the symposium. Rates are \$40 plus 8% for weekdays and \$65 plus 8% for weekends and \$5 for each extra person. First night's deposit must be made one week ahead of time. Registrants must contact Sam's Town at 1-800-634-6371. Hotel shuttle service to and from McCarran International Airport **MAY** be available by then, but was not available in 1995.

Registration begins at 0800 Friday with the first presentation beginning at 0900. A special session on plants is planned to include cryptograms, native vs. exotic plants, restoration of native grasses and native annual herbs. Tortoise population sampling, ecosystem plans implementing the desert tortoise recovery plan, disease and health, culverts and highways, fire, demography, behavior, survivorship, ravens, and management topics are also planned.

21st ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM REGISTRATION:

See page 5 for registration forms.

SYMPOSIUM PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST:

See page 3. PRINTS this year!

EXHIBITS AND VENDOR'S BOOTHS:

Our space manager for exhibits and vendor's booths this year is Mike Giusti. Please contact him for rules and your needs. Availability will be on a first come-first served basis. Register with him at least 30 days prior to the symposium.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING:

The 21st annual Desert Tortoise Council business meeting will be held on Saturday afternoon immediately following the last symposium session for the day.

Among other annual business activities, officers will be nominated and elected for several positions.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITY FOR REGISTRATION:

Your Council needs registration and other administrative help during the 1996 Symposium. We are offering a limited number of students free registration for the symposium with a reasonable amount of assistance during some periods of the symposium. Contact Lisa Kegarice, Council Secretary, at (909) 383 7669.

COUNCIL TREASURER NEEDED

Beginning in March of 1996 the Desert Tortoise Council will need a new Treasurer. The Treasurer is an elected, voluntary, unpaid position. He or she serves an important position on the Board of Directors of the Council and normally serves a two-year term. Duties that follow are excerpted from the Council Bylaws:

Treasurer. This officer shall be responsible for receiving and distributing all funds of the Council. This officer shall maintain the Council's financial statements and records. A written audit of the Council's accounts for that year shall be submitted to the Co-chairpersons at the annual meeting. In the event the Co-chairpersons, Co-chairpersons-elect and Corresponding Secretary are unable to serve in their capacities, the Treasurer shall serve pro-tempore.

This is an opportunity for a Council member to contribute in a very important way. If you are interested in the position, please contact the Council via Tom Dodson at 909-884-9700 or at the mast head address. Please submit a short resume that would relate to your abilities as treasurer.

1997 SYMPOSIUM NEWS

We had so much positive feedback that we locked in the 1997 symposium with Sam's Town. We have tentatively set April 4,5, and 6, 1997. We will inform you when these dates are firm.

COUNCIL TELEPHONE NUMBER

The Desert Tortoise Council can be reached at (909) 383-7669. Voice mail and FAX are available.

VOLUNTEER SOUGHT FOR PROCEEDINGS DISTRIBUTION TO LIBRARIES

An important goal of the Desert Tortoise Council is to disseminate information and education opportunities on the desert tortoise to the public. To help facilitate this, the Council is seeking a volunteer to prepare a list of libraries, primarily within States occupied by wild desert tortoises both in the United States and Mexico. The volunteer would determine which may need sets of Desert Tortoise Council Proceedings and facilitate getting the proceedings to these institutions. If you would like to help, please contact the Council at (909) 383-7669 and ask for Lisa or Tom, or contact any board member at the symposium.

PROCEEDINGS

The 1995 Desert Tortoise Council Symposium Proceedings are being edited by Vanessa Dickinson. The proceedings are scheduled to be available at the 1996 symposium.

PROPOSED REVISION OF BYLAWS FOR COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP TERMS

Section 3. Members shall pay the specified dues required of active members of the Council on a calendar year basis. Membership is to be renewed on the anniversary of application acceptance, i.e. when the Council received the first dues.

Membership extends from the date of dues payment until the Thursday prior to the Annual Symposium each year (generally on or about the end of March). Memberships may be renewed any time prior to a symposium. No memberships will be pro-rated.

Dues shall be \$12.00 per year for a general membership; \$8.00 for students; \$55.00 for societies, groups or clubs; \$50.00 for contributing; and \$300.00 for a lifetime membership. There will be no additional cost to those lifetime memberships applied for prior to March 19, 1988. Student memberships require the endorsement of their Advisor or Major Professor.

EDITOR NEEDED FOR 1996 PROCEEDINGS

We desperately need an editor for this year's proceedings. Please contact any board member or phone (909) 383-7669. THANKS!

ANNOUNCING ANNUAL DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

The photography contest once again will be held in conjunction with the Annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium, BUT, with some significant changes. The big change is that we will accept PRINTS this year, not slides. This will allow all attendees to view the photos and vote on their favorites. To somewhat offset the increased costs of submitting prints, we have raised the first place awards to \$25.

ENTRY DEADLINE IS 12:00 noon,

MARCH 29, 1996 The Council is sponsoring the annual contest to honor and encourage our members to participate in educating the public through photography.

AWARDS

Qualified winners will be awarded first, second, and third place ribbons in each category and a best of show plaque will be awarded. All first place winners will receive \$25 and the best of show an additional \$25. (The increase from \$20 to \$25 is to make up for your added costs of prints.)

CATEGORIES

1. WILD DESERT TORTOISES
2. CAPTIVE (PET) DESERT TORTOISES
3. OTHER DESERT REPTILES
4. DESERT MAMMALS
5. OTHER DESERT WILDLIFE
6. WILD DESERT PLANTS
7. DESERT SCENICS
8. TORTOISE CONSERVATION

RULES

With the exception of Captive (Pet) Tortoises, all PRINTS must be taken of WILD (i.e., unrestrained

and photographed in its natural habitat) subjects occurring within the geographic range of the desert tortoise. Prints may be either color or black and white and should be mounted. We will accept unmounted prints, although they do not show as well. Contestants may submit a maximum of two PRINTS per category. Photos must have been taken by the contestant and will be judged at the Symposium by the attendees. Attendees will pick up ballots at the registration table and vote Friday and Saturday until noon. The category "TORTOISE CONSERVATION" is fairly open, but should depict activities or subject matter important in the perpetuation of the species. Examples are research, impacts (i.e. raven predation), improvements (i.e. fencing), and environmental education. The back of each PRINT must include the following information: Category; Common & Scientific Name of the Subject, if applicable; Location, Date PRINT Taken; Contestant's Name, Address, & Phone Number (No names on the front please, titles and date OK).

PRINTS will not be returned and become the property of the Desert Tortoise Council. The Council shall have the right to use these photographs in its publications and educational programs, as well as to assign such permission to others, with full credit given to the photographer. Contestants may mail entries to Bob Parker, 600 W. Weiman St., Ridgecrest, California 93555 or submit them on the first day of the symposium, before 12:00 noon. Winners need not be present to receive their awards. If you have questions, phone (619) 384-5425 (work), or (619) 446-2001 (home).

ANNIVERSARY T-SHIRTS STILL AVAILABLE

Commemorative T-shirts are available honoring the 20th Anniversary of the Desert Council. They are high-quality heavyweight cotton and are available for \$15.00 plus shipping and come in M, L, and XL sizes. Mostly L and XL remain. They will be available at the Symposium.

6th ANNUAL DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SURVEY TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP HELD

This year's workshop, held in Ridgecrest, California on 28 and 29 October, was a great success! Speakers included Dr. Kristin Berry, Dr. Dave Morafka, Dr. Bill Boarman, Dr. Kurt Rautenstrauch, and many others,

including several "old timers:" Pete Woodman, Alice Karl, Gilbert Goodlett, and Dave McCullough. Extensive information about desert tortoise life history, surveys, and other topics was provided during indoor presentations and outdoor demonstrations. About 80 students, representing local, state, and federal governments and many private organizations from California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah attended the two-day workshop. Thanks to all students and instructors for making this one of the best workshops ever! At this time, we expect there will be a 7th Annual Workshop

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM FOR DISPLAYS, BROCHURES, OR EXHIBITS FEATURING THE DESERT TORTOISE

The Desert Tortoise Council has begun a program designed to further the exposure of people to the desert tortoise, its habitat, and issues surrounding its protection in the wild.

The Council recognizes that museums, zoological gardens, other educational institutions or groups, and agencies have unique capacities to capture imaginations and to enhance the knowledge of large numbers of people from varied walks of life.

The Desert Tortoise Council proposes to form partnerships with institutions desiring to develop means to improve the exposure and knowledge of desert tortoise issues to more people.

The geographic base of this program lies within the four States inhabited by the desert tortoise: Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah.

The Desert Tortoise Council may make matching grants of up to \$1,000 to institutions that propose developing displays, brochures, or exhibits furthering the Council's goal: To assure the continued survival of viable populations of the desert tortoise, *Gopherus agassizii*, through its existing range. Projects should focus on ecology and natural history of the desert tortoise. However, the Council is most interested in projects that include information on threats to the tortoise and how people can protect the tortoise. Grants may vary in size based upon proposals and the nature of other matching funding shown by the submitting institution.

This program is available throughout the year, and proposals may be made at any time.

Proposals must include: Name of Institution; Name of primary contact; Address and phone number; Title and theme of project; Description of project as complete as possible; Funding structure and sources secured for the project; Schedule for project completion; Estimated life of the completed project; Means to guarantee the project's completion; and other salient points that may promote the value of the proposal, such as the number of visitors to the institution in the last year.

Submit proposals to:
Desert Tortoise Council
463 North Sierra Way
San Bernardino, California 92401

1996 DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL 21st ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

March 29, 30, 31, 1996, Las Vegas, Nevada

Return to: Desert Tortoise Council 463 North Sierra Way San Bernardino, CA 92401 Phone: 909-383-7669

Please complete a SEPARATE form for each attendee. (Please Print or type.)

Name: _____

Organization: _____

(name to be used on badge) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Fax: _____

SYMPOSIUM FEES Enter Amount

Member Registration (\$75.00) _____

Non-Member Registration (\$95.00) _____

Late Fee Postmarked After March 10, 1996 (\$15.00) _____

Non-member Registration (\$95.00) _____

Membership Dues (\$12.00) (\$15.00) _____

Regular Membership Dues (\$12.00) _____

[see dues schedule in newsletter]

Banquet (\$18.00) ___ Check here if VEGETARIAN _____

Raffle Ticket (\$1.00 each) _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Monday Field Trip

I would like to attend the Monday, April 1 field trip (to be announced)

Yes ___ No ___

Desert Tortoise Council

1996 ANTI-ENVIRONMENT, ANTI-PUBLIC LAND BILLS IN THE WORKS

S. 852 is known to some as the livestock grazing act. This Domenici (R-NM)-sponsored bill would leave most of the public lands now managed by BLM to primacy of the cattle ranching industry. Such use would predominate over other uses, such as conservation for threatened and endangered species. The bill prevents meaningful public participation on range management on national forests and public lands. The bill also circumvents NEPA compliance on on-the-ground grazing actions. It also prevents science-based and professional management efforts. New number for the bill is S.1459.

Don't worry, the House has an even worse version pending.

S.1151, sponsored by Conrad Burns (R-MT) would establish a commission seeking to dispose of the public lands.

SENATE ACTION ON ESA POSTPONED

Another of a host of ESA-related bills, this one, S.1364 is being delayed in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. They will postpone work until later in 1996. S.1364 was introduced by Senator Dirk Kempthorne (ID). This bill has been assailed by conservationists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Ecological Society of America, and others. Among many bad provisions, the bill would prevent attempts to recover species that would require "extraordinary efforts," reports the Wildlife Management Institute. Of course, by the time a species is listed endangered, extraordinary measures are usually needed because they are on the precarious edge of extinction. New definitions of "endangered" and "threatened" would preclude a host of those already listed due to impossible "scientific certifica-

tion” requirements. Protection would be removed for subspecies and vertebrate populations. This could affect the desert tortoise, salmon stocks in the north-west, and a host of other species. The House has a similar bill reported from committee (H.R.2275, the “Pombo-Young bill) will probably not proceed until the Senate starts up.

S.768, introduced by Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) is another bill to be wary of it has some similar and some more hidden and insidious ways of preventing conservation of endangered species. This bill was discussed in previous newsletters.

WEST MOJAVE PLAN NEWS

BLM is developing working groups to develop solutions for about 34 land issues that still need resolution. Many meetings are to occur in January and February. The Council and Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee are participating in as many of these as possible. Ones of primary interest are: Habitat protection, cattle grazing management prescriptions, competitive events/corridors, incidental take, no desert tortoise clearance areas, sheep grazing management prescriptions, Hatching and rearing, translocation, mitigation fees, cost of implementation and sources of funding. If you have any questions or wish to participate more in this pivotal plan, contact BLM at West Mojave Plan 222 East Main St., Suite 202, Barstow, CA 92311, or phone 619-255-8852.

SPECIAL PANELS, SESSIONS, AND SPEAKERS

The 21st annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium promises a host of timely topics. Some of these include PIT tags and marking techniques, new sampling techniques, comparison of sampling techniques, hatchling tortoise requirements, health studies in Utah and Arizona, reproduction, starvation, poaching, fire, grazing, off-road vehicles, noise, recovery plan implementation, habitat recovery, demography, physiology, mitigation effectiveness, desert plant community ecology, cryptogams, and others.

NATIONAL PARKS IN TROUBLE

Through the federal budget process and other means, some congressional members are seeking to gut some parks from the system, to reduce the size of others, and to make others unmanageable. One example, is

House rep. Jerry Lewis’ (R-CA) attempt to remove appropriations from the park service and to divert them to BLM for management of the East Mojave National Preserve-- the newest park in the system, and one occupied the desert tortoise. last year’s H.R. 260 would create a park closure commission.

DTPC PLANS MOJAVE DESERT EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH CENTER

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. has announced plans to develop a world-class environmental educational center along interstate 15-- one of the most traveled highways in California, which will attract travelers of diverse backgrounds to learn and understand their unique roles in protection the precious animal and plants species that depend on the vast, life-rich Mojave Desert. The building site will be on Zzyzx road at the mid-point between Las Vegas and Los Angeles. This effort will have far-reaching benefits to the desert and the desert tortoise. the DTPC needs your support. Call (909) 884-9700 for details.

COUNCIL BYLAWS (PART I)

Article I - Name

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL.

Article II - Goal and Objectives

Section 1. The goal of the Desert Tortoise Council (Council) is: To assure the perpetual survival of viable populations of the desert tortoise within suitable areas of its historic range.

Desert tortoise, for the purpose of the Council, includes only the species Gopherus (Xerobates) agassizii.

Section 2. The objectives of the Desert Tortoise Council are:

a. To serve in a professional advisory manner, where appropriate on matters involving management, conservation and protection of desert tortoises.

b. To support such measures as will contribute to ensuring the continued survival of desert tortoises and the maintenance of their habitat in a natural state.

c. To stimulate and encourage studies on the ecology, biology, management, and protection of desert tortoises.

d. To serve as a clearinghouse of information among all agencies, organizations and individuals engaged in work on desert tortoises.

e. To disseminate current information by publishing proceedings and transactions of meetings and other papers as deemed appropriate.

f. To maintain an active public information and conservation education program.

g. To commend outstanding action and dedication by individuals and organizations promoting the objectives of the Council.