

The Desert Tortoise Council Newsletter Summer/Fall 1998

OUR 23rd YEAR

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

1999 DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM NEWS

Arrangements are now being made for the 24th Annual Symposium and Business Meeting in St. George, Utah. St. George, the gateway to Utah's "Color Country," is a mere 90 minutes from Las Vegas and boasts arguably the most picturesque Mojave desert tortoise habitat in its range. St. George was chosen for this year's site based on the recommendations of participants of the 1998 and earlier symposia and because of the many important activities that are occurring in the area. The symposium was last held in St. George in the early 1980's. A special session on translocation is planned. Other topics include restoration of habitat, trends in populations and habitat, success of mitigation measures such as translocation; breeding programs; impacts of land uses on tortoises; and general biology, ecology, physiology, health, disease, and predation.

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Friday, March 5, 1999, with the first presentation beginning at a time yet to be determined. Arrangements are being made for multiple field trips and we are looking forward to learning more about this very special area which hosts the smallest Mojave desert tortoise recovery unit, the first Federally listed population of desert tortoises, and the first ever well-studied population of tortoises (Woodbury and Hardy) on the Beaver Dam Slope.

We have reserved the Holiday Inn, St. George, hotel meeting rooms for Friday, March 5, 1999, through Sunday, March 7, 1999. The Holiday Inn Resort Hotel - St. George Convention Center, 850 South Bluff St., St. George, Utah 84770, (800) 457-9800, (435) 628-4235, (435) 628-8157 Fax, email:: sgeut@infowest.com -web site: www . infowest. com/holidayinn. Interstate 15 runs right through St. George, in the southwest corner of Utah, and Las Vegas has very reasonable air fares for those not intending to drive all the way. Shuttle service from McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas is available through Autobus Shuttle at 1-800-5009786, and from the St. George Airport via the Holiday Inn shuttle. From Salt Lake City, drive south on I-15 about 5 hours. Turn north at the Bluff Street exit and go about one mile north on

Bluff Street. The Holiday Inn is on the west side of Bluff Street across from Albertson's.

We have 80 rooms blocked for the event, including Thursday, March 4; through Sunday night, March 7. Rooms rates are \$70.00, single or double, which will exceed Federal lodging rates. Rooms include cable TV with HBO and ESPN, coffee makers, hair dryers, data ports, irons with ironing boards, queen or king beds. Facilities include indoor/outdoor heated pool, billiards, table tennis, children's play area, fitness room, guest laundry, tennis court and putting green, video arcade, and gift shop. Within walking distance are two shopping centers, many restaurants, six movie theaters, and a driving range. Just a short drive away are the Zion Factory Outlets, Red Cliffs Mall, Zion National Park, Snow Canyon State Park, and Tuacahn center for the arts.

The special block of rooms will not be available after February 5, 1999. DON'T PROCRASTINATE, make your reservations now. Mention you are with the Desert Tortoise Council for the special rate. For more information call Tim Duck at 435-688-3238 or email at tduck@az. blm. gov.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITY

We are offering a limited number of students free or reduced registration in exchange for a reasonable amount of assistance during the symposium. Contact Tim Duck at 435-688-3238 (email tduck@az.blm.gov) or Ann McLuckie at 435-688- 1426.

EXHIBITS AND VENDOR'S BOOTHS -- 1999

Our space manager for exhibits and vendors booths this year is Bob Keeran. Please contact him for rules and to define your needs for space and equipment. Availability will be on a first come, first-served basis. Register with Bob at least 30 days prior to the Symposium. Bob can be reached at 760- 245-8362 or fax at 760-2451071. Due to a previous commitment made by the hotel for another function, the vendor space will only be available for Friday and Saturday. Vendors or exhibitors wishing to display on Sunday

will be provided an alternative location within the hotel.

1999 FIELD TRIPS PLANNED IN THE ST. GEORGE AREA

Monday, March 8, 1999 will promise a splendid variety of field trip possibilities. Four separate trips are in planning stages:

1. Desert Tortoise Fire Ecology Study, led by Todd Esque, at the Pakoon Basin on the Arizona Strip. This long day trip will include effects of fire on wildlife including desert tortoises, fire ecology, alien plants, and the status of research. The research includes experimental manipulation of desert habitats to understand mechanisms of habitat change with disturbance by fire.

2. Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and Incidental Take Areas, led by Bill Mader and Rick Fridell in Hurricane, N. Washington, St. George, and Gunlock, Utah. This trip will include the status of the Habitat Conservation Plan, including land acquisition, boundary fencing, clearance procedures, education center, acquisition of grazing privileges, monitoring, and other features.

3. Northeastern Mojave Recovery Unit, led by Tim Duck, will include the Woodbury-Hardy Study Plot, Washington County Utah, and the neighboring Littlefield Study Plot in Mohave County, Arizona. The trip will include discussion of the status of the Northeastern Mojave Recovery Unit, including ACECs, mineral resources, grazing administration, lands and realty, transportation, off-highway vehicles, wild burros, and agency coordination. Additionally, previous and current research and monitoring efforts will be covered.

4. Desert Tortoise Translocation Study may be led by Dawn Wilson and Dick Tracy to the Babylon Management Zone 4 and Gunlock Study Area, parts of the Washington County Desert Tortoise HCP. Considered on this trip will be current research efforts, findings, future efforts and objectives.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The 24th annual Desert Tortoise Council business meeting will be held at 8:00 a.m., Friday, March 5, at the Holiday Inn in St. George. Among other annual business activities, officers will be nominated and elected for several positions. All Council members are

invited to attend the business meeting.

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED AT 1998 BUSINESS MEETING

The Corresponding Secretary position was filled by Ed LaRue, Jr. Katherine Zander and Tim Duck volunteered to run again and were reelected to their positions as Senior Co-chair and Junior Co-chair. Due to resignations of the Cochair elect and Treasurer, the board appointed Mike Coffeen Treasurer and Marc Graff Cochair-elect, at the July 18, 1998 board meeting, following the protocol detailed in the bylaws.

ONGOING COUNCIL PROJECTS

This summer, your Council representatives

_ are providing comments on a variety of agency projects affecting the desert tortoise, including the West Mojave Plan.

_ are answering letters and our worldwide web site e-mail from a variety of individuals, many of them schoolchildren, who are curious about the desert tortoise and its desert environment.

_ Placed abstracts from the last symposium on our world wide web site.

1998 SYMPOSIUM PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS

Winners at the 1998 Symposium in Tucson are listed below in each category:

WILD DESERT TORTOISES: Sylvia Jordan

CAPTIVE (PET) DESERT TORTOISES: Rebecca Holt

OTHER DESERT REPTILES: David Silverman

DESERT MAMMALS: Karen Spangenberg

OTHER DESERT WILDLIFE: Sylvia Jordan

WILD DESERT PLANTS: Karen Spangenberg

DESERT SCENICS: Sylvia Jordan

TORTOISE CONSERVATION: Karen Spangenberg

BEST OF SHOW: David Silverman

First Prize for each category received \$25 and Best of show received another \$25. Now is the time to plan to participate in the photo contest in 1999.

EARLY ALERT FOR SONORAN DESERT HERP SYMPOSIUM

Mike Demlong of the Phoenix Zoo reports they are planning a symposium on April 9-10 1999 entitled "Current Research on Herpetofauna of the Sonoran Desert." It will be held at the zoo and Dr. Harry Greene is the keynote speaker. Dr. Cecil Schwalbe is the banquet speaker. Dr. Roger Conant will attend, health permitting. Registration is a mere \$35.00, including the banquet. For more information you can e-mail Mike Demlong at mdemlong@primenet.com.

SYMPOSIUM ON STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF FLORIDA TURTLES

The Second symposium on the status and conservation of Florida turtles will be held at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida on October 8-11, 1999. This symposium will address the problems faced by Florida turtle species as well as conservation strategies and specific recovery solutions. A volume describing the conservation biology of Florida turtles at the end of the 20th century is planned. Anyone wishing to contribute to one or more species accounts is asked to contact Peter Meylan at < meylanpa@eckerd.edu > . For more information, contact the Gopher Tortoise Council, c/o George L. Heinrich, 1223 Alhambra Way S., St. Petersburg, FL 337054620, (813)865-6255, e-mail: < highpine@gte.net > .

SYMPOSIUM PHOTO CONTEST

Along with our new print and voting format, we hope to have a mix of old and new faces as winners. First Place winners win \$25.00 and Best of Show wins an extra \$25.00.

We will accept mounted prints this year, not slides. This will allow attendees to view the photos and vote on their favorites. ENTRY DEADLINE IS 12:00 noon, MARCH 5, 1999. 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 the added costs of the 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 must be mounted. Each contestant 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 Subject, Location, Date PRINT Taken, Contestant's Name, Address, & Phone Number (No names on the front please, titles & date OK)

PRINTS will not be returned, except upon advance request, 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 submit entries to Bob Parker 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).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

This comes from the newsletter Tortoise Tracks, of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. An article co-authored by member Dr. Kristin Berry appears in the July 1998 edition (34:3) of the Journal of Wildlife Diseases. Titled Pathology of diseases in wild desert tortoises from California, the article documents work designed to address the types of diseases and associated pathologic changes occurring in wild desert tortoises, rather than the prevalence of disease. It was part of a larger study on density of desert tortoise populations.

If you have or know of a journal article on desert tortoises that you wish to share, drop us a line or e-mail our web site.