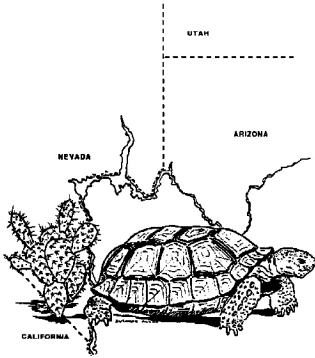


THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2006
OUR 31ST YEAR

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

2006 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM RECAP

The 31st Annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium was held February 17 through 20, 2006 in Tucson. The Annual Business Meeting kicked off the weekend's events. A slightly earlier start than normal was scheduled to accommodate all the presentations.

The 31st Symposium had something for everyone: plenty of presentations on desert tortoise research and management, vendors, invited speakers, awards, and meeting and making new friends! Presentation highlights included the keynote address by **Dr. Valentine Lance**; featured and banquet speaker **Dr. Brian Henen** spoke about the Namaqualand speckled padloper as well as his work with four other species of South African tortoises and two species in Madagascar; **Dr. Mary Brown** spoke about lessons learned regarding URTD and the gopher tortoise; and **Dr. Jim Juvik** talked about releasing the wrong turtles in the right places.

There were presentation on: research of Mojave and Sonoran desert tortoises; government management efforts to recover the tortoise; and

fire and its effects on tortoises and their habitats. There were also presentations on the Bolson tortoise, headstarting, and the efforts of non-governmental organizations regarding tortoise conservation. Ancillary meetings were held around the Symposium to discuss Bolson tortoise conservation needs.

Probably one of the most noteworthy revelations, was the intriguing possibility that what we now know as the desert tortoise is possibly three species, instead of one. Work is preliminary and any other concrete developments will be reported here.

Instead of the banquet this year we tried a mixer instead. All of the other normal Saturday evening activities occurred. By having a mixer in place of a formal banquet, we reduced costs for normal banquet attendees, and we finished the evening a little earlier.

On Monday there were field trips to Saguaro National Park - East and the Granite Hills Permanent Study Plot.

The abstracts can be found on our web page at:

<http://www.deserttortoise.org/abstract/abstracts2006/2006abstracts.pdf>

Photo Contest Winners

Each first place winner took home \$50 and the Best of Show won \$100.

Wild Desert Tortoise	Ken Nagy
Captive (Pet) Tortoise	Ellen Schafhauser
Other Desert Reptiles	Andrew Walde
Desert Mammals	Shelley Ellis
Other Desert Wildlife	Ellen Schafhauser
Wild Desert Plants	Shelley Ellis
Desert Scenics	Shelley Ellis
Tortoise Conservation	Andrew Walde

Best of Show - Shelley Ellis

Desert Scenic photo of saguaro cactus



The DTC would like to extend a big "Thank you" to Andrew Walde. Andrew donated his photo contest winnings of \$100 back to the Council to assist the on-going desert tortoise research in Sonora Mexico. Photo contest winners at:

<http://www.deserttortoise.org/awards/photo2006win.html>

Vendors and Exhibitors

Center for Biological Diversity

Daniel Patterson
P.O. Box 710, Tucson, Arizona 85702
(520) 623-5252 x 306
Fax (520) 623-9797
dpatterson@biologicaldiversity.org
www.biologicaldiversity.org

Desert Tortoise Council

P.O. Box 3273, Beaumont, CA 92223
<http://www.deserttortoise.org>

H.A.B.I.T. Research Ltd.

John Joynt, 692 Sumas Street, Victoria, BC,
V8T 4S6, Canada
(250) 381-9425
john@habitresearch.com
<http://www.habitresearch.com>

Hahn's Natural History Books

Donald Hahn, P.O. Box 1004,
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
(928) 634-5016
hahnnatu@sedona.net

Rincon Institute

Michelle Zimmerman, 13701 E. Old Spanish
Trail, Tucson, AZ 85747
(520) 647-7833 or 1 (877) 6RINCON
Fax: (520) 290-0969
<http://www.rinconinstitute.org>

Stevan Logsdon

P.O. Box 4070, Silver City, NM 88062
(505) 388-8101
logsdon_johnson@zianet.com

Tucson Herpetological Society

Dennis Caldwell
P.O. Box 709, Tucson, AZ 85702-0709
<http://tucsonherpsociety.org>

Zonk Galleries

David Hoobler

P.O. Box 11059, Oakland, CA 94611

(510) 530-2681

davidhoobler@sbcglobal.net

<http://www.zonktheturtle.com>

Desert Tortoise Council Awards

Annual	Douglas Duncan
Research	Valentine Lance
Special	Jeffrey Aardahl
Special	Mercy Vaughn
Service	Maggie Fusari
Service	Tom Egan

In addition, the Best Student Paper Award and the first David J. Morafka Memorial Scholarship both went to Erin R. Zylstra of the University of Arizona, Tucson, for her research entitled "Evaluating Monitoring Strategies for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise in Saguaro National Park."

JOHN BEHLER

The Bronx Zoo asked me (David T. Schiff) to let John's colleagues in the herp community know of his death on January 31, of this year. I had the good fortune of spending a day with him just a week ago as we put the finishing touches on a manuscript we were working on. At the end of the day we made plans to meet in late winter at Bog Brook where we have been surveying turtles together for nearly a quarter century. His death has been a great shock to me and everyone who knew him.

John served as Curator of the Herpetology Department since 1976 at the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bronx Zoo. Since 1996, he has also served as the Program Coordinator

for the Wildlife Conservation Society's Wildlife Survival Center on St. Catherines Island, Georgia. Behler started his career with the Wildlife Conservation Society as a New York State Council on the Arts curatorial trainee in 1970.

Behler assumed leadership positions in the development of captive breeding programs for endangered and threatened crocodylians, tortoises, and freshwater turtles. Through his efforts, batagur turtles and false gharials successfully bred in captivity for the first time at the Bronx Zoo. He received the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's (AZA) Edward H. Bean Award in 1980 for most significant reptile birth for his work with Chinese alligators. Behler's interests also focused on the ecology and behavior of reptilians and reptilian diseases. He had also done extensive field studies of the tortoises of Madagascar and of North American spotted and bog turtles.

Among his many conservation affiliations, Behler chaired the World Conservation Union's Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and was a member of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Turtle Trade Working Group. He was a former coordinator of the AZA's Crocodylian Advisory Group and was a member of the AZA's Chelonian and Lizard Taxon Advisory Groups. Behler worked closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Endangered Species Unit and the National Park Service. He served on his community's Conservation Board and on the Westchester County Environmental Management Council.

Behler received a Bachelor's degree in Zoology/Botany from the University of Miami and a Master's degree in Biological Sciences from East Stroudsburg University.

A native of Pennsylvania, Behler resided in Amawalk, New York with his wife. He authored more than 40 popular and scientific articles and four guidebooks highlighting reptiles and amphibians.

The following announcement was prepared by the Wildlife Conservation Society:

"The Board of Trustees and Staff of the Wildlife Conservation Society are profoundly saddened by the death of our esteemed colleague, John L. Behler. As Curator of Herpetology, Behler began his WCS career in 1970 in the Reptile Department as an intern. John's knowledge and love of wildlife included working with WCS field staff on related projects in Madagascar and Asia and is known and appreciated world-wide. His work exemplified the long history of WCS setting standards for others to follow. He assumed a leadership role among his peers in groundbreaking captive breeding programs for endangered crocodilians, tortoises, and freshwater turtles and also focused on the ecology and behavior of reptilians.

John's quick wit, charm and dedication allowed him to share his life's work with many. Among his numerous affiliations, John was a founding member of the American Zoo and Aquarium's Crocodilian Advisory Group and worked closely with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Endangered Species Unit. Likewise, Behler served his community on the Sommers Conservation Board and Muscoot Farm Nature Center in Westchester County Park.

Behler authored more than 40 popular scientific articles, five guidebooks highlighting reptilians and amphibians and co-authored a book "Frogs - A Chorus of Colors" with his wife Deborah Behler.

We are all saddened by the loss of our friend, a great scientist and conservationist. Our heartfelt sympathies go to John's wife, Debbie; mother, Mildred; sister, Judy Howells; John's children Cindy Sibilia, and David Behler and his five grandchildren."

David T. Schiff
Chairman

Ed. Note - John Behler was a featured speaker at several DTC Annual Symposia.

The Current Board of Directors of the Desert Tortoise Council

Senior Co-Chair	Pete Woodman
Junior Co-Chair	Dan Pearson
Co-Chair Elect	Kristen Murphy
Recording Secretary	Lori Rose
Corresponding Secretary	Pat von Helf
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Board Member	Kristin Berry
Board Member	Becky Jones
Board Member	Cari Ronning
Board Member	Glenn Stewart
Board Member	Bob Turner

Newsletter Editor/Membership [Doug Duncan](#)
Webmaster [Michael Comor](#)

FUTURE ANNUAL SYMPOSIA

The symposia location for 2007 and beyond has not been set. Suggestions or bids for future symposia locations and venues will be gratefully accepted. The Board of Directors is researching several locations: Las Vegas, St. George, and Laughlin.

15th ANNUAL SURVEYING, MONITORING, AND HANDLING TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP

The 15th Annual Surveying, Monitoring, and Handling Techniques Workshop is scheduled for November 4 and 5, 2006 at the Carriage Inn in Ridgecrest, CA. **The workshop is full!**

If you would like to be placed on the waiting list, please contact Tracy or Mike Bailey at tracy.bailey@mchsi.com. Registration information will be sent out via e-mail in mid-August to those registered. The cost of the workshop is \$250.00.

The DTC Tortoise Handling Workshops are recognized by the USFWS and CDFG, but a certificate of attendance and participation **does not guarantee** a USFWS or CDFG permit. However, completion of the Workshop should help with the permitting process.

NEWSLETTER/MEMBERSHIP

For those receiving hard copy newsletters, your membership expiration date will be in the upper right-hand corner of the label. For those receiving their newsletter via e-mail, we will research ways to include membership expiration dates if it is not too time-consuming. If we have your e-mail address, we will notify you via e-mail when your membership has expired or is about to expire. So, when you join or renew your membership, please include a current e-mail address. Member contact information is used solely for Council business. We also use e-mail for the newsletters and rarely, other special announcements. Please send change of mailing address or e-mail address to either the DTC address or the membership chair (fdhcky@cox.net).

CONSERVATION NEWS

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Federal Indictments filed for Illegal Trafficking of Protected Reptiles

A cooperative investigation led by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agents, Oregon State Police, Arizona Game and Fish Department wildlife investigators has resulted in federal indictments of nine people in the District of Arizona. The indictments stem from violations of the Lacey Act that involved the unlawful interstate sale and transport of reptiles taken in violation of state wildlife laws.

Protected live reptiles, including Gila monsters, were illegally collected, then sold and transported from Arizona to Oregon and other states. Service agents and wildlife investigators served several search warrants and conducted numerous interviews as part of the investigation. To date, indictments have involved people from California, Oregon, Arizona, Texas, Nevada, and New York.

The Lacey Act prohibits the transportation and sale of wildlife in interstate commerce in violation of state laws. The Lacey Act provides, for felony violations, maximum penalties up to five years imprisonment and/or \$250,000 in fines.

Gila monsters are protected by Arizona wildlife laws. One of only two venomous lizards in the world, the Gila monster can be found in portions of Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Mexico. Gila monsters are highly sought after in the international black market trade of live reptiles and can be valued up to \$3,500 for each animal.

Mojave Max Makes Spring Debut

Mojave Max, the famous southern Nevada desert tortoise who resides at the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, officially emerged from his burrow at 11:32 a.m. April 3, 2006.

The tortoise's debut is hailed by hundreds of students in Nevada and California who have been studying Mojave Desert weather, temperatures, and conditions to scientifically estimate when Mojave Max would emerge from his burrow in 2006. They entered their guesses on line at www.mojavemax.com.

The entries are being tabulated and the official winner will be announced soon. Eligibility for prizes offered in southern California included students in grades 1 to 12 enrolled in schools in Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties.

"The Mojave Max Emergence Contest is one of several components of a desert wide tortoise education program being developed by the Desert Managers Group (DMG) to help students learn more about the desert tortoise," said Anne Staley, DMG desert tortoise outreach coordinator.

The DMG is a consortium of county, state, federal and military agencies that work together to manage federal and state lands within southern California and frequently deal with issues directly and indirectly related to desert tortoises, their habitat, and the management of both.

"Our goal is to get all students in southern California involved in the contest and our educational program to learn more about the tortoise, which was federally listed as a threatened species in 1990," added Staley.

"The Mojave Max Emergence Contest is an exceptional teaching tool that provides a clear tie between the health of the environment and the species that depend on it," said Juan Palma, field manager for the Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Field Office.

Like other desert tortoises, Mojave Max enters a burrow to brumate (the reptilian form of hibernation) every winter and emerges every spring. Warmer temperatures, longer daylight hours and an internal clock are factors known to contribute to his emergence every year.

Bureau of Land Management Grazing Regulations

This issue has been covered in previous newsletters. First is the BLM's news release, and following that is a release from the Center for Biological Diversity. Ed.

BLM Issues Addendum to Final EIS On Proposed Grazing Regulation Changes

The Bureau of Land Management recently released an addendum to its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposed regulations that will change the BLM's management of public lands grazing. The addendum and final EIS, posted on the BLM's Website, conclude that the proposed regulations will produce long-term health benefits for public rangelands. The proposed new grazing regulations, collectively known as a "rule," will be finalized in the near future and published in the Federal Register.

In producing this addendum, the BLM considered all comments made on the proposed changes to our grazing regulations, said BLM Director Kathleen Clarke. "The proposed new regulations, when finalized and implemented, will enable the BLM to manage public rangelands more effectively and efficiently

through, among other things, a better working relationship with public lands ranchers. We have proposed these regulatory changes to promote the long-term health of public rangelands, which are vital to the economy and social fabric of Western rural communities.”

The BLM published its proposed grazing rule in December 2003 (http://www.blm.gov/nhp/news/releases/pages/2003/pr031205_grazing.htm.) The agency followed up with a draft EIS and received more than 18,000 comments on those two documents during its public comment period. The BLM published its final EIS in June 2005 (<http://www.blm.gov/grazing>), after which the agency announced that it would prepare an additional document to respond to comments that came in after the March 2, 2004, comment deadline.

Interior Department Moves to Cut Conservation and Citizen Participation on Western Public Lands

WASHINGTON, DC – In another giveaway to industry, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is finalizing new rules that would limit public oversight of public lands grazing leases across millions of acres of the West. These rules are another administration attack on the influential National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an important law which has protected the public interest and environment for more than 36 years.

Livestock grazing on arid western public lands can be a significant environmental threat to wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation. BLM has proposed to categorically exclude livestock grazing permits from the NEPA analysis in cases where allotments have been evaluated and the allotments are determined to be meeting land health standards. However, there is no requirement that these determinations involve standard science-based monitoring data, or any quantifiable rationale, and there will be no formal opportunity for the public to participate in helping to make those

determinations. There will be no analysis of cumulative effects, harm to plants and wildlife, or impacts to imperiled species. There is also no limit to the number of these permits that can be excluded in any given year, which could lead to widespread use of the exclusion.

“BLM’s rules are a big threat to western landscapes and we will fight them,” said Greta Anderson, Range Restoration Director with the Center for Biological Diversity in Tucson, Arizona. “NEPA has provided a way to participate in public lands ranching decisions. BLM wants to cut out essential public interest input and concerns.”

The new rules also propose to exclude “temporary non-renewable grazing use permits” from NEPA. Unfortunately, even short-term grazing can have long-term impacts to ecosystems, and BLM should be taking a hard look and analyzing all of the impacts of even temporary use. There are indications that long-lived species such as the desert tortoise are highly dependent on a few good years in 100, to maintain their populations. Temporary use permits are often geared to use additional forage produced in good years. Improper livestock grazing on arid lands accelerates erosion, pollutes waterways, degrades wildlife habitat, and alters vegetation communities.

Kolkata tortoise, Clive's pet, dies at 250 years

KOLKATA (Reuters) - A giant Aldabra tortoise thought to be around 250 years old has died in the Kolkata zoo of liver failure, authorities said on Thursday.

The tortoise had been the pet of Robert Clive, the famous British military officer in colonial India around the middle of the 18th century, a local minister in West Bengal state said.

Local authorities say the tortoise, named "Addwaitya" meaning the "The One and Only" in Bengali, was the oldest tortoise in the world

but they have not presented scientific proof to back up their claim.

"Historical records show he was a pet of British general Robert Clive of the East India Company and had spent several years in his sprawling estate before he was brought to the zoo about 130 years ago," West Bengal Forest Minister Jogesh Barman said.

"We have documents to prove that he was more than 150 years old, but we have pieced together other evidence like statements from authentic sources and it seems that he is more than 250 years old," he said.

The minister said details about Addwaitya's early life showed that British sailors had brought him from the Seychelles Islands and presented him to Clive, who was rising fast in the East India Company's military hierarchy.

On Thursday, the tortoise's enclosure wore a deserted look. "This is a sad day for us. We will miss him very much," a zoo keeper said.

Wild Aldabra tortoises are found on Aldabra Island in the Indian Ocean Seychelles Islands. They average about 120 kg. It is believed that tortoises are the longest lived of all animals, with life spans often surpassing 100 years.

Mojave Desert Tortoise Monitoring Report

The long-awaited monitoring report is now available for review and comment. It can be downloaded as a PDF at:

http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/dt_reports.html/

The report does not yet include results from the 2005 season, but these will be incorporated into the final. If you have comments on the report, please send them to [Roy Averill-Murray](#) of the USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office by April 29, 2006. _____

Fort Irwin Record of Decision (ROD) for the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) available

The Department of the Army announces the availability of its ROD for the Proposed Addition of Maneuver Training Land at Fort Irwin, California. On 20 January 2006, the Army published a notice of availability of its SFEIS. The SFEIS reviewed the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of five action alternatives associated with the addition of maneuver training land at Fort Irwin, as well as a No Action (status quo) alternative.

Based on the SFEIS, the Army has chosen to implement Alternative I, the East/West Alternative. Under this alternative, additional lands totaling about 150,510 acres would be added to the available training lands. The decision includes training in new areas to the east and west of the existing Fort Irwin, and in a portion of southern Fort Irwin previously off-limits to training. Expansion of the maneuver area of the National Training Center (NTC) provides an extended battle space (land and air) for training Army brigade-sized units according to the Army's training and combat operations.

Alternative I was chosen because it best meets the Army's need for additional training land. There are impacts to many natural resources expected as part of the proposed action, especially desert tortoise. Mitigation has been proposed to offset the impacts identified in the SFEIS. Even taking into account this mitigation, however, there will still be significant impacts to threatened and endangered species, loss of vegetation cover, loss and disruption of soil surfaces, and loss of wilderness characteristics to adjacent wilderness areas.

The decision also restates the Army's stated commitment to environmental stewardship by implementing mitigation and monitoring measures to offset potential adverse environmental impacts associated with the

preferred alternative, as identified in the SFEIS and the ROD.

**Sign-on A Letter from Biologists
Concerning Science
in the Endangered Species Act**

Though the letter from the [Union of Concerned Scientists](http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/resolving/science-in-the-endangered.html) has been delivered, additional action may be needed. The letter with 5,738 signatures was hand-delivered to each senator's office on Wednesday, March 8, 2006. Several scientists were in Washington, D.C. to personally deliver the letter to key senators and their staff and to discuss the importance of science to species protection. In more than a dozen additional states, scientists' personalized cover letters accompanied the biologists' letter and signatures.

The efforts to protect science in the Endangered Species Act continue and will likely extend into the next session of Congress. Although they do not currently have specific plans, an opportunity may arise in the future to re-deliver the letter with additional signatures. If you would like to add your name for consideration as a letter signer, go this page:

http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/resolving/science-in-the-endangered.html

The letter is open to biologists with or working towards an advanced degree. In addition, on a case-by-case basis, we will consider those who have extensive life experience working in the field that gives them particular knowledge of species and their habitats. Read the letter at:

http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/resolving/biologists-letter-on.html

**Recovery Plan Revision:
The First Step - Situation Assessment**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has secured the independent assistance and impartial expertise of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (Institute) in engaging affected and interested stakeholders in the collaborative process to revise the Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise. The Institute will assess the feasibility of a collaborative approach to recovery planning using the structure of Regional Working Groups, and then if appropriate, designing, convening, and facilitating a process aimed at reaching agreement on regional recovery action plans and achieving broad stakeholder support for a scientifically credible recovery plan. All working group activities will be guided by the Basic Principles for Agency Engagement in Environmental Conflict Resolution and Collaborative Problem Solving.

The Institute shall procure and manage the provision of independent neutral services to include assessment, process design, convening, facilitation, meeting summaries, mediation, and possibly other related neutral services associated with conducting and documenting the Regional Working Group process, which will be focused on developing consensus-based regional action plans. The Institute will conduct the selection process, with participation by interested stakeholders, for choosing a team of third-party neutral contractors to partner with and assist the Institute. In addition, the Institute will provide ongoing advice on collaborative problem solving to FWS and Regional Working Group participants, along with project management and contractor oversight services.

PATAGONIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTS PROGRAM

Patagonia (<http://www.patagonia.com>), the outdoor clothing and gear company, provides support for environmental work through grants to nonprofit organizations.

Patagonia funds only environmental work, and is most interested in making grants to organizations that identify and work on the root causes of problems and that approach issues with a commitment to long-term change. The company funds work that is action-oriented; builds public involvement and support; is strategic in its targeting and goals; focuses on root causes; accomplishes specific goals and objectives that can be effectively measured; and takes place in countries where Patagonia has retail stores or an international office.

The company does not fund organizations without 501(c)(3) status or a comparable fiscal sponsor; general environmental education efforts; land acquisition, land trusts, or conservation easements; research (unless it is in direct support of a developed plan for specific action to alleviate an environmental problem); environmental conferences; endowment funds; or political campaigns.

Most grants are in the range of \$3,000 to \$8,000. Patagonia accepts proposals for programs that fit its grant guidelines during the months of April or August. Only one proposal from an organization will be considered per year.

Please note that organizations based in a community in which Patagonia has a retail store or an international office should submit their request to the store. Retail store applications are accepted year-round.

Visit the Patagonia Web site for complete program information and grant application procedures.

Deadline: April 30, 2006 and August 31, 2006

Request for Proposal link:

<http://fconline.fdncenter.org/pnd/10001676/patagonia>

For additional RFPs in Environment, visit:

http://fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat_environment.html



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Desert Tortoise Council
c/o Doug Duncan
P.O. Box 331
Tucson, AZ 85702

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_____ Contributing (\$50.00 per year) _____ Lifetime (\$300 or more)
_____ Student (\$10.00 per year- Requires endorsement of student's advisor or Major Professor)

NEWSLETTER FORMAT:
_____ Mailed paper copy _____ Pdf file via e-mail _____ E-mail notice for web page viewing

Make check or money order payable to the Desert Tortoise Council
and **send** with this application

to: **Desert Tortoise Council, P.O. Box 3273**
Beaumont, CA 92223

The Desert Tortoise Council does not release its membership list

www.deserttortoise.org