

THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2006
OUR 31ST YEAR

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

2006 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM - TUCSON

The Desert Tortoise Council Symposium is in Tucson again. It will be held downtown from February 17 to 20, 2006 at the same hotel. The hotel used to be the Radisson, but is now The **Hotel Arizona** (181 West Broadway).

The 31st Anniversary Symposium will have special sessions, featured speakers, mixers, awards, the raffle and auction, and field trips. Dr. Walter Whitford, author of numerous articles on southwestern deserts, will be a featured speaker. He will also be signing his new and highly rated book, *Ecology of Desert Systems*.

Dr. Brian Henen, who recently returned from South Africa, and a former DTC member, will be a featured speaker on his research on physiology and reproduction in the Namaqualand speckled padloper. He will also give a presentation on his work with four other species of South African tortoises and two species in Madagascar.

Dr. Valentine Lance, co-editor of a newly published book on *Temperature-Dependent Sex*

Determination in Vertebrates, will be speaking on that subject and signing his new book.

There will be papers on research of Mojave and Sonoran desert tortoises. There will also be another group of presentations by government officials on their management efforts to recover the tortoise. Dr. Matt Brooks is chairing a session on fire and its effects to tortoises and their habitats. There will be a couple papers again on the Bolson tortoise, including one by Dr. Lucina Hernandez Garcia, on the Status of the Bolson Tortoise in the Mapimi Reserve: Past, Present, and Future. There will also be presentations on the recent work on the desert tortoise in Mexico. Finally, there will be sessions on Fort Irwin translocation, headstarting, and conservation organization activities. The Morafka Scholarship winner will be announced. We are also working on some additional special featured speakers.

Please note that the start time for presentations will be 9:30am on Friday, instead of the usual 10am. This is to allow for the large number of presentations and special speakers. The Annual Business Meeting will begin at 8am. The

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Sessions continue until Sunday afternoon. Field trips will occur on Monday. There will be the usual assortment of books, shirts, and other items on sale. Don't forget raffle tickets!!

So far for the raffle and auction we have: a large Hamil Ma framed pencil and charcoal drawing of Joshua Tree National Park; *Life on the Edge*, the huge picture-laden book about California's rare and endangered species; and a large, framed print of the large photo of fighting tortoises featured in *Life on the Edge*.

We should also have items from South Africa, and some Native American Art. If you have items to donate for the raffle and auction, please bring them along!

Instead of having a banquet this year, we are trying something new. We will have a mixer with enough food to suffice as dinner. We will then have the featured speaker, awards, and the raffle and auction. This is included in the cost of registration, so everyone may attend- and is encouraged to! This will allow more people to attend the awards, the speaker, and the raffle and auction. It also allows more time for networking and socializing in a relaxed atmosphere. We expect this format will also allow us to end earlier.

Presentations must be on a compact disc or flash drive and must be PowerPoint 2000 compatible and presented at registration. All PowerPoint presentations will be given on computers provided specifically for that purpose. No personal laptops and no zip disks! Slide presentations (35 mm) are still acceptable, but overhead projections are not. PowerPoint is the preferable presentation format. These rules will help the presentations flow smoothly and keep the sessions on time.

Registration fee structure has changed slightly. The new structure makes it even more attractive

to be a member, and to register early. Student registration remains the same.

A block of rooms at The Hotel Arizona is reserved for February 16 to 20. The room rate for single and doubles is \$85 a night. All rates are European Plan and with taxes of 11.5% plus a \$1.00 per room per night City Surcharge. Your rate includes full fitness privileges to the YMCA located just blocks from the hotel, wireless high speed internet access, free local phone calls, daily newspaper delivery, and in-room complimentary water. When making reservations (1-800-845-4596 or 520-624-8711), ask for reservations and state that you are with the Desert Tortoise Council. Rooms should be reserved before January 17, 2006 as the remaining unused rooms will be released into hotel inventory. Refer to The Hotel Arizona web page for additional information:

<http://www.thehotelarizona.com>

and information on Tucson can be found at:

<http://www.visittucson.org>

If any individual or group is interested in making a donation for the symposium or for the raffle/auction, please contact Doug Duncan, local host chair, at fdhcky@cox.net.

For vendor information, contact Eric Stitt at stitt@cox.net.

REGISTRATION & PHOTO CONTEST INSIDE THIS ISSUE

You must register to attend. Preregistration as a member is the best value. The deadline for early registration is **January 15, 2006 (January 14 postmark)**.

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PHOTO CONTEST

The Council sponsors the annual Photo Contest to honor and encourage our members to participate in educating the public through photography. Mike Bailey is managing the 2006 Photo Contest.

FORMAT. For 2006, the format is mounted print and digital photographs either in black and white or color (no slides). All prints must be matted, NO GLASS FRAMES please. All prints must be labeled with the following information placed on the back of the PRINT: common and scientific names of subject; location; date PRINT was taken; contestant's name, address, and phone number; and entry category. No names on the front, please, but titles and date are acceptable. This year, the Council encourages contest entrants to also submit electronic copies (in jpg format) of their entries so that they can be posted on the website before the Symposium.

AWARDS. Qualified winners will be awarded first, second, and third place ribbons in each of the eight categories. First Place awards will be \$50; second and third place winners will receive ribbons. The Best of Show will receive \$100.

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. This category covers a range of subjects, but must depict activities or subject matter important to the perpetuation of the species. Examples are research, impacts (i.e., raven predation), improvements (i.e., fencing), and environmental education.

OTHER 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. Each contestant may submit a maximum of two PRINTS per category. Photos must have been taken by the contestant.

SUBMISSION OF PRINTS. PRINTS must be available for viewing no later than 3:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon, February 17. You may either bring your prints and provide them to Mike Bailey at the Symposium early on Friday or mail them to him at: 619 Pinon Court, Ridgecrest, CA 93555. PRINTS must arrive at this address by Friday, February 10, 2006. Photographers do not need to be present to win. To ensure that your entries are posted on the website before the Symposium, submit electronic copies (in jpg format) to the [DTC webmaster](#).

JUDGING. Prints will be judged at the Symposium by the attendees. Attendees will pick up ballots at the registration table and voting will be from 3:00 p.m. Friday to Saturday until 3:00 p.m. Winners will be announced at the Awards on Saturday night.

PRINTS will not be returned, except upon advance request, and will become the property of the Desert Tortoise Council. The Council will 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.

REGISTRATION FORM

Desert Tortoise Council 31st Annual Meeting and Symposium February 17-20, 2006

Return to
Desert Tortoise Council
P.O. Box 331
Tucson, AZ 85702-331

Please complete a SEPARATE form for each attendee.
Please print or type

Name: _____ **Organization:** _____
(First, Last) (Name to be used on ID badge)

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

E-mail: _____ **Daytime Phone:** _____ **Fax:** _____

SYMPOSIUM FEES

		ENTER AMOUNT
Member Registration	\$90.00 (\$125.00 if postmarked after 1/14/2006)	_____
Student Member Registration	\$40.00 (verification required) (\$60.00 if postmarked after 1/14/2006)	_____
Non-member Registration	\$115.00 (\$140.00 if postmarked after 1/14/2006)	_____
One-day Registration	\$60 Day _____	_____
Regular Membership Dues	\$15.00 (see dues schedule in newsletter)	_____
Raffle Ticket(s)	@ \$1.00 each	_____
	TOTAL ENCLOSED	_____

Make check payable to **Desert Tortoise Council**
Only checks or fully executed purchase orders are accepted

Monday Field Trip
I would like to attend one of several Monday, February 20, 2006, field trips
Yes: _____ No: _____

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14th ANNUAL SURVEYING, MONITORING, AND HANDLING TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP

October 22-23, 2005, Ridgecrest, California

Ninety-nine students recently attended the DTC's workshop in Ridgecrest, CA, bringing the total 14-year enrollment to more than **1100** participants! The DTC would like to extend its sincere thanks to the donors who supported the workshop. Three companies contributed money toward this highly acclaimed event. The donors listed alphabetically include:

Garcia and Associates (GANDA)
Michael Brandman Associates
Romero Enterprises, Inc.

The Council would like to thank the following speakers and instructors who donated their time and effort: Dr. Kristin Berry (UGSG-BRD), Curtis Bjurlin (Endangered Species Recovery Program, CSU Stanislaus), Ray Bransfield (USFWS), Paul Frank, Gilbert Goodlett (EnviroPlus Consulting), Becky Jones (CA Dept. Fish & Game), Dr. Alice Karl (Alice Karl & Associates), Bob Parker (BLM), Daren Reidle (Nongame Branch AZ Game & Fish), Ray Romero (CH2M Hill), Sharon Romero, Rachel Woodard, and Peter Woodman (Kiva Biological Consulting).

The Council would also like to thank the following volunteers who helped with the registration, audio/visual equipment, lights, and set-up of the outdoor plots. They include: Mike Bailey, Rich Crawford, Shelley Ellis, Cynthia Furman, Bob Parker, Ray Romero, Sharon Romero, David Schultz, Arik Skromme, Paul Smith, and Rachel Woodard.

Finally, we would like to extend special thanks to Gilbert Goodlett for again allowing us to use his audio/visual equipment and for operating the equipment ; to Patty Glasco for providing her pet tortoises for the handling demonstration; and to Ed

LaRue for his fantastic job emceeding the workshop and keeping it on schedule!

The DTC coordinates these workshops because we believe that well-trained, knowledgeable biologists and monitors for projects play essential roles in the conservation of tortoises and their habitats.

The next workshop is tentatively scheduled for November 4 and 5, 2006 in Ridgecrest, CA. If you would like to be placed on the list to attend or if you would like to make a donation toward the workshop, please e-mail: tracy.bailey@mchsi.com. The Desert Tortoise Council's two-day workshops are structured to provide information on the handling, monitoring, surveying, and biology of desert tortoises.

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

Over the last several years, the Desert Tortoise Council newsletter has been mailed electronically and also made available on the DTC web page as a pdf file. These electronic options will conserve resources, and make sending the newsletter quicker, and more efficient and economical. Members receiving the newsletter can receive the newsletter up to a week earlier than those receiving a paper copy, depending on the efficiency of the U.S. Postal Service. It costs hundreds of dollars to mail each newsletter. If you wish to change how you receive the newsletter or update your address, e-mail Doug Duncan at fldhcky@earthlink.net.

We are also interested in your thoughts and ideas. Please pass along information/content for the newsletter. Appropriate newsletter items would be

updates on research projects, interesting observations in the field, and timely job announcements. The newsletter editor would prefer to cut and paste instead of write the newsletter articles.

Also, when you join or renew your membership, please include a current e-mail address. Member contact information is used solely for Council business. We use e-mail for the newsletters, membership expiration, and rarely, other special announcements. Please send change of mailing address or e-mail address to either the DTC address or the membership chair (fldhcky@cox.net).

The Current Board of Directors of the Desert Tortoise Council

Senior Co-Chair	Doug Duncan
Junior Co-Chair	Pete Woodman
Co-Chair Elect	Dan Pearson
Recording Secretary	Lori Rose
Corresponding Secretary	Pat von Helf
Treasurer	Mike Coffeen
Products Manager	Tom Egan
Immediate Past Co-Chair	Bob Turner
Board Member	Tracy Bailey
Board Member	Kristin Berry
Board Member	Becky Jones
Board Member	Kristen Murphy
Board Member	Cari Ronning
Board Member	Glenn Stewart
Newsletter Editor/Membership	Doug Duncan
Webmaster	Michael Connor

ELECTIONS

The Council bylaws state that those standing for election at the Annual Business Meeting must be identified at least 30 days before the meeting. The

offices up for election this year are: Co-chairperson-elect, Corresponding Secretary, and Products Manager. Nominated for these positions respectively are: Kristen Murphy, Pat von Helf, and Tom Egan. All currently serve as board members, and Tom and Pat currently serve in those positions. The Co-chairperson-elect changes annually. Additional nominations from the floor may be placed on the Nominating Committee's slate during the Annual Business Session of the Annual Meeting. Such nominees must formally accept the nomination while present on the floor. No person can be nominated who is not present at the Business Session of the Annual Meeting. Members who are unable to attend the Annual meeting may vote by mail. Their ballots must be received by the Corresponding Secretary before the Annual Meeting.

NEW DTC ADDRESS

The DTC has a new address. All mail correspondence should be sent to this address:

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

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The membership list contains 370 entries: 268 regular members, 6 student members, 9 organizational members, 53 life members, and 30 complimentary. For the newsletter, 157 are mailed out as a paper copy, 204 are e-mailed, and 9 members receive an e-mail notice that the newsletter is available on our web page. A large number of memberships expire in the next few months. Please send in your renewal and keep the Tortoise Council strong!

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.

CONSERVATION NEWS

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West Mojave Plan Biological Opinion Released

The oft reviewed and oft litigated biological opinion for the California Desert Conservation Area's West Mojave Plan was signed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Ventura office on January 9th of this year. The biological opinion is what the BLM needs to comply with some of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. The biological opinion covers the threatened desert tortoise, threatened Parish's daisy (*Erigeron parishii*), and the endangered Cushenbury milk-vetch (*Astragalus albens*), and the endangered Lane Mountain milk-vetch (*A. jaegerianus*). Only time will tell if this biological opinion survives the fires of litigation. The biological opinion can be found at:

<http://www.tortoise-tracks.org/documents/documents.html>

Proposed Desert Southwest Transmission Line Project Final EIS/EIR Released for Public Review

The joint final environmental impact statement and environmental impact report (EIS/EIR) analyzing the proposed desert southwest transmission line project has been released by the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for public review and comment.

The EIS/EIR assesses potential environmental impacts to construct, operate, and maintain the 118-mile long 500 kilovolt electrical transmission line, which would be located parallel and next to Interstate 10 between North Palm Springs and Blythe, California. The document analyzes four alternatives, which are consistent with the 1980 California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) plan. Alternative B however is outside the designated utility corridor and would require an amendment to the CDCA plan. The proposed project traverses desert tortoise habitat.

"This type of project could help meet the growing demands for energy in southern California," said Gail Acheson, field manager for the BLM Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office. "And we fully analyzed its impacts."

To request a copy of the EIS/EIR contact the BLM Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office at (760) 251-4800. The document also is available online at www.ca.blm.gov/palmsprings.

The public is provided 30 days to submit comments on this EIS/EIR before a final decision on the project is issued by the BLM. The process to make comments and deadlines are provided with the final EIS/EIR. Comments must be received by Wednesday, January 25, 2006. The BLM will issue a final decision on the project after conclusion of the 30-day review period.

For more information contact BLM's Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office at (760) 251-4800.

Holiday of Off-roading Death and Destruction at Dunes

Over 200,000 off-roaders mobbed the Algodones (Imperial) Sand Dunes over the thanksgiving holiday. At least six people were killed in off-roading incidents in Imperial County, including a five year old boy. The environment, air, and endangered species habitat were trashed.

Hospitals in Imperial and Yuma County were overloaded. Imperial County Deputy Coroner Henry Proo called it “the worst weekend I have ever seen.” (Yuma Sun, Nov 27).

Despite all the death and environmental destruction, the US Department of the Interior is still pushing to expand off-roading at the dunes by reversing a five year old conservation agreement.

“What doesn't BLM understand about Glamis? Despite spending millions of dollars out there, an irreplaceable national landmark is being destroyed, children are being killed, mayhem continues, and BLM acts like everything would be just hunky-dory if they could just have more off-roaders out there. It's madness!” said Karen Schambach, California Director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). PEER represents the concerns of many affected Interior Department biologists and staff.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has announced it will reconsider an off-road industry petition to end Endangered Species Act protection for the Peirson's milkvetch, an endangered attractive flowering plant found only at the Algodones Dunes.

Off-road industry lobbyists pushed for the de listing before, but just last year FWS biologists said it was not justified. But this spring, Interior Department political appointee Julie McDonald took a trip to the dunes with off-road lobbyists to discuss ending Endangered Species Act protection for the milkvetch.

“The Algodones Dunes are a fragile and scenic place being sacrificed to ‘Mad Max on meth’ mayhem. People and the environment are being killed out there due to Bush administration and industry anti-conservation ideology, and it has to stop,” said Daniel R. Patterson, a desert ecologist with the Center for Biological Diversity who formerly worked with BLM in the California Desert Conservation Area.

A federal court recently ruled that the flat-tailed

horned lizard must be considered for Endangered Species Act protection in part due to off-roading damage in Imperial County.

In addition to the Peirson's milkvetch, the desert tortoise and dozens of endemic dunes plants and animals are imperiled by extreme off-roading at the Algodones Dunes. Hikers, birdwatchers, photographers, and other people are displaced from the dunes by hordes of off-roaders and related dangers.



Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment

The report of the team assessing the 1994 Recovery Plan for the Mojave tortoise has been released. The assessment committee reviewed the recovery plan beginning in 2003. The assessment can be found at:

<http://www.fws.gov/arizonaes/Documents/SpeciesDocs/DesertTortoise/DTRPACreport.pdf>

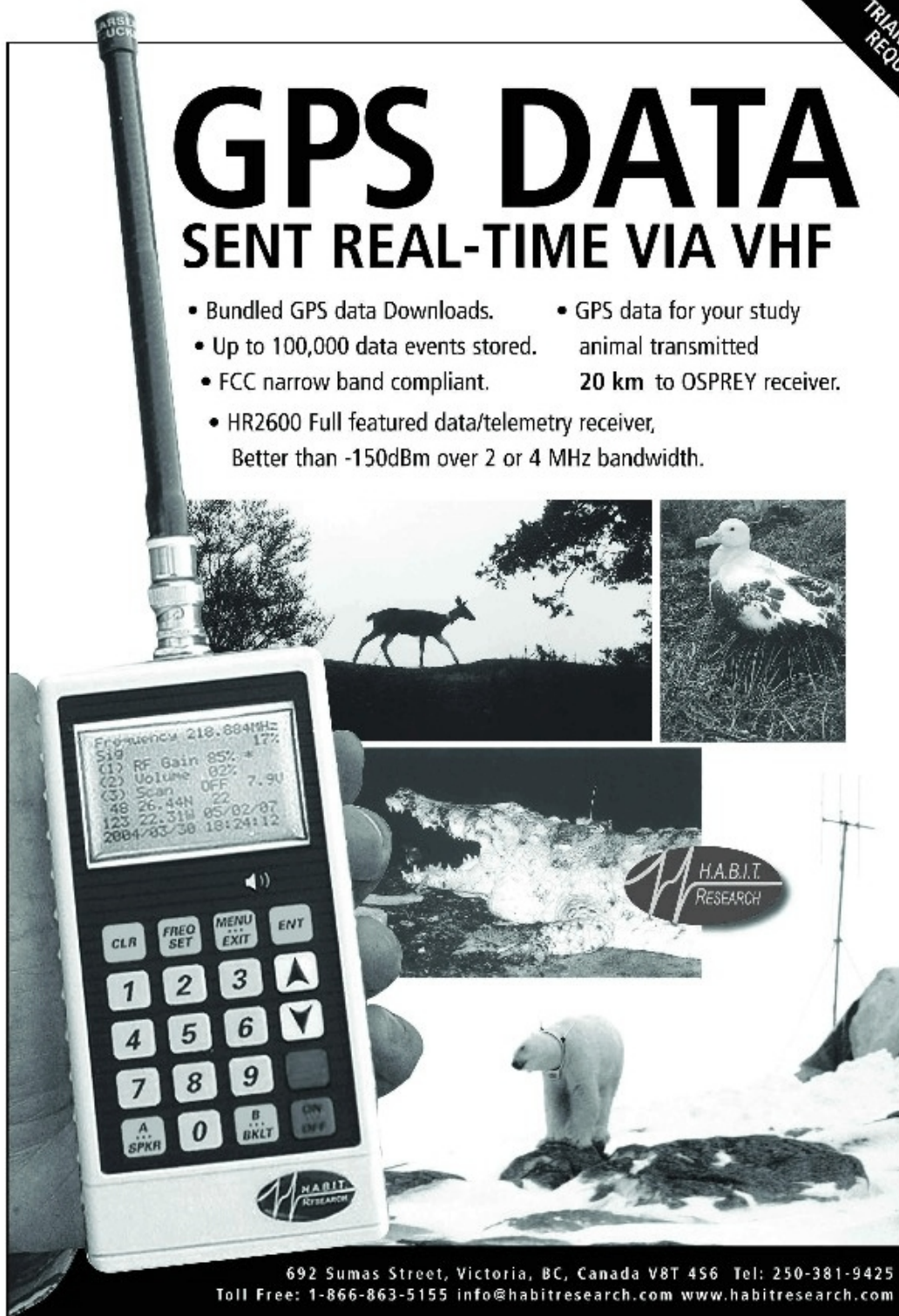
Summary findings of the committee include:

- The Recovery Plan of 1994 was fundamentally sound.
- Analyses of tortoise distributions and abundances indicate trends leading away from recovery goals in some parts of the species range.
- A USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) should be established (done).
- Many of the original prescriptions of the were never implemented.
- Recovery planning should reflect distinctness of population segments within the species range.
- Status and trends of populations/ metapopulations within DPSs are potentially impossible.
- A new definition of recovery is needed.

**NO
TRIANGULATION
REQUIRED!**

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

Check one: _____ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL _____ CHANGE OF ADDRESS
DATE: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
NAME: _____ PHONE: _____
(Please Print) *(Include Area Code)*
ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

_____ Regular (**\$15.00** per year) _____ Organization (\$55.00 per year)
_____ 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