



THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

FALL/WINTER 2008-OUR 33rd YEAR

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

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER...

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL 2009 SYMPOSIUM	1
17 TH ANNUAL HANDLING WORKSHOP – ANOTHER SUCCESS!.....	2
BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	4
FROM THE EDITOR.....	4
ANNOUNCEMENTS.....	4
NEWS	4
RELATED MEETINGS	15
JOB OPENINGS.....	15
SCHOLARSHIPS / AWARDS	16
OPINION.....	17
DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL.....	19

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL 2009 SYMPOSIUM

VENTURE TO A NEW VENUE 2009 Symposium in Mesquite, Nevada

We are excited to bring the Symposium to a new venue this year, the Casa Blanca Resort and Casino in Mesquite, Nevada. Initially we planned to hold the meeting in St. George, but the board decided to move it to Mesquite to secure lower hotel room rates within the government per diem limits.

Field Trips. Our Mesquite location provides easy access to tortoise habitat. **Thursday's** field trips to the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and the Woodbury-Hardy plot on the Beaver Dam Slope will be just a short van drive away. We hope you will join us as local biologists and reserve managers lead trips into the northern-most corner of desert tortoise habitat. It will be a great chance to stretch your legs before the classroom portion of the program begins on Friday. **Field trips start at 1:00 PM SHARP on Thursday. You will be picked up and dropped off at the Casa Blanca. You can expect to be back to Mesquite by approximately 7 PM.**

Field Trip #1: Tour of the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve

Richard Fridell, Utah Division of Wildlife Biologist, will lead a tour of the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. Discussion topics will include: Proposed education projects, impacts of wildfires, recreation,

**MAKE SURE TO REGISTER FOR THE
SYMPOSIUM BY 1/16/2009 TO TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THE EARLY BIRD RATES!**

Highlights of the weekend include:

- Dr. Dan Beck's presentation on Gila monsters
- A special session on The Effects of Recreation on Wildlife with several knowledgeable speakers
- Maybe if we are lucky, some more pairs of tortoise undershorts for the auction!!!

status of desert tortoise population, and future challenges of the Reserve. *Group size will be limited to twelve.

Field Trip #2: Successes and Challenges of Translocation/Utah

Ann McLuckie, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Biologist, will lead a tour of the translocation site within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. Discussion topics will include: status of translocated tortoises, current monitoring efforts, and future challenges. *Group size will be limited to twelve.

*The two Red Cliffs Field trips may be grouped together depending on the number of people who sign up as well as the interest in each group.

Field Trip #3:

Karen "Kitti" Jensen will lead a tour of projects and places on the Beaver Dam Slope in Arizona, including a potential translocation project as a result of BLM landsale. If time and interest permit, the group may travel to the historic Woodbury-Hardy plot. Group size limit may apply.

You must sign-up for field trips with your registration, as space is limited and they are on a first-come, first-served basis. See the registration form for more details. There will be a waitlist for the field trips. You will be notified of any cancellations as soon possible so you can adjust your travel plans.

Hotel Registration. To reserve your room at the Casa Blanca, call 1-877-438-2929. You must be at least 21 years of age and have a major credit card. Be sure to mention you are with "The Desert Tortoise Council," or group #17904. Room rates per night for Weds-Thurs. is \$49.98 and Fri-Sat is \$64.98, subject to 9% room tax. Requests for rooms after January 19 will be accepted on a space-available basis but the special group rate will not be available. Late registrants may want to look into rooms at the Oasis Resort Casino across the street.

Symposium Registration. BIG NEWS!! DTC is now set up to process registrations online using

PayPal. Please take advantage of earlybird Symposium registration rates. If your registration is postmarked, or processed online, after January 14, rates are higher.

Transportation. Mesquite is approximately 1 hour north of Las Vegas and 35 minutes south of St. George on Interstate 15. If flying into Las Vegas, you can rent a car or contact Mesquite Bus Company at 888-855-4287.

Though Mesquite Bus Co has suspended daily shuttles due to the economy, they have agreed, to provide charter airport transportation for our group. They can offer an afternoon (~ 2 PM) and evening shuttle pickup (~7 PM) Thursday at McCarran Airport, and return shuttles Sunday (~ noonish and ~ 4 PM). Please make reservations by Friday, February 6. Cost will be approximately \$50.00 round-trip per person.

**REGISTRATION FORMS FOR THE 2009
DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM
ARE AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY ON
THE DTC WEBSITE AT
WWW.DESERTTORTOISE.ORG**

**17th ANNUAL HANDLING
WORKSHOP – ANOTHER
SUCCESS!**

The Desert Tortoise Council held its annual "Introduction to Desert Tortoise Surveying, Monitoring, and Handling Techniques Workshop" on October 25 and 26, 2008, in Ridgecrest, CA. During the weekend 114 students participated, bringing the total 17-year enrollment to over 1600 participants. The Council would like to thank the speakers and instructors who donated their time toward making this workshop such as success.

Once again, the Council was fortunate to have Ed LaRue emcee the workshop. The first day of the workshop began with Dr. Kristin Berry of the U.S. Geological Survey, and who is also one of the founding members of the DTC. Dr. Berry presented three separate talks, "General Overview of Mojave Desert Tortoise"; "Threats to Tortoises"; and "Field

Evaluations of Desert Tortoises for Health and Disease and Effects of Diseases on Populations.” Peter Woodman of Kiva Biological Consulting and the senior co-chair of the DTC presented “Finding Tortoises and Distinguishing One Type of Sign from Another.” The comprehensive morning session was followed by a delicious lunch that was generously **sponsored by The Chambers Group, Inc., Sharaih Romero and the DTC.** After lunch the students traveled to the outdoor field site that was provided by the Indian Wells Valley Water District. Here they observed artificial burrows constructed with the use of several different resources; egg handling and burrow excavation demonstrations by Alice Karl, Paul Frank, Rachel Woodard, and Peter Woodman; and the different kinds of tortoise-proof fencing available, the advantages of each, how the fencing should be installed, etc. And for the upcoming field survey tortoise burrows, scat, and styro-torts were also available to aid in sign recognition.

After an early morning continental breakfast, the second day began with the agency panel. Robert Parker (BLM, Ridgecrest) presented “The Desert Tortoise and the Bureau of Land Management, A Biological Consultant’s Guide: Endangered Species Act Compliance, Biological Survey Protocol and Biological Assessment Format.” Ray Bransfield (USFWS, Ventura) spoke on section 7(a)(2), section 9, section 10(a)(1)(B), and section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act; and Rebecca Jones (CDFG) spoke about sections 2081(b) and (c) of the California Endangered Species Act- the incidental take permit process. The students were then given an opportunity to ask questions of the agency representatives. Dr. Alice Karl (Alice Karl & Associates) gave two presentations, “Tortoise Field Surveys, Data Collection and Interpretation,” and “Translocation.” Our final and newly added speaker, Brian Arnold (Burns & McDonnell) gave a presentation on construction monitoring, sharing his learning experiences on past and present projects. After the presentations, Ed LaRue introduced invited guests, Don Cortichiato, president of the Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD) and Tom Mulvihill, general manager. On behalf of IWVWD they accepted a “Service Award” for their support of the DTC’s workshop. The IWVWD for

the past 14 years has donated the use of their land so the DTC could have a place for its outdoor sessions. In the afternoon the students again traveled to the outdoor training site. The students observed the processing of a live tortoise. This included weighing, measuring, sexing, and observing it for disease. The last field exercise of the workshop had the students performing a tortoise survey. Each survey area (plot) had burrows, styro-torts, and actual tortoise scat of all sizes. The students learned to walk transects and map their findings. At the end of the day, they received an attendance certificate. Another certificate will later be given stating that they witnessed the USFWS-approved demonstrations and completed the on-line test.

The DTC would like to recognize Ms. Betty Burge who made a generous monetary donation in support of the workshop.

We would also like to thank the following volunteers who helped set-up of the outdoor plots. They include: Mike Bassett, Sarah Clegg, Brenda Hanley, Colby Hawkinson, Geo. Keyes, Jr., Josh MacNaughton, Alex Mach, Bram Role, Eric Somers, Tiffany Trahon, and Mike Welch.

Finally, we would like to extend special thanks to Mike Bailey, Tim Hockin, and Sharaih Romero who helped with registration; to David Carr who provided the audio/visual; to Patty Glasco for providing her pet tortoises for the handling demonstration; Mark Bratton of Edwards Air Force Base for again providing the cd “A Delicate Balance” to each attendee; 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 scheduled for November 7-8, 2009 in Ridgecrest, CA. Workshop space is limited, so if you’d like to attend, please e-mail: tracy.bailey@mchsi.com.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Senior Co-Chair:	Peter Woodman
Junior Co-Chair:	Doug Duncan
Co-Chair Elect:	Vacant
Recording Secretary:	Lori Rose
Corresponding Secretary:	Pat von Helf
Treasurer:	Mike Bailey
Products Manager:	Tom Egan
Immediate Past Co-Chair:	Dan Pearson

Board Members

Board Member:	Tracy Bailey
Board Member:	Kristin Berry
Board Member:	Sean Daly
Board Member:	Rebecca Jones
Board Member:	Bruce Palmer
Board Member:	Carolyn Ronning
Board Member:	Glenn Stewart
Board Member:	Bob Turner

Membership:	Pat von Helf
Newsletter:	Sean Daly
Website:	Michael Connor

FROM THE EDITOR

Since most of the newsletters are being received electronically, we would like to invite everyone to send us your photos. Have really great pictures of tortoises or other wildlife? Send them to us and we will put a few of them in the newsletter each issue. Any other updates or news items are welcome as well.

Also, if you have moved or have a new email, please make sure you update your mailing and email addresses.

In an effort to conserve time, money, and paper, we strongly encourage all of our members to receive the newsletter electronically rather than hardcopy.

Send your photos and any other updates to sdaly@burnsmcd.com.

Address Updates!!!

Please renew your addresses, including e-mail. Every time we e-mail newsletters, 10 to 20 percent of the e-mail addresses, as well as the snail mail addresses we have are bad.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Desert Tortoise Council now accepting credit cards (PayPal)

The Desert Tortoise Council is now accepting credit card payments (MasterCard and Visa only at this time) on our website, www.deserttortoise.org. You will be able to pay your membership dues and purchase a copy of the Proceedings on CD.

If you have any comments/suggestions, please email Tracy Bailey at tracy.bailey@mchsi.com

Handling workshop tests

Attendees of the 2007 Handling Workshop...your tests are being graded now. Please hold all your questions regarding scores until the end of the year. Results will go out once ALL the exams have been graded. Thank you for your patients.

NEWS

Feds Rush to Ease Endangered Species Rules

15 reviewers, 200,000 comments, 32 hours to go through all of them

WASHINGTON - Rushing to ease endangered species rules before President Bush leaves office, U.S. Interior Department officials are trying to review 200,000 comments from the public in just 32 hours, according to an e-mail obtained by The Associated Press.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has called a team of 15 people to Washington this week to pore through letters and online comments about a proposal to exclude greenhouse gases and the advice of federal biologists from decisions about whether dams, power plants and other federal projects could harm species. That would be the biggest change in endangered species rules since 1986.

In an e-mail last week to Fish and Wildlife managers across the country, Bryan Arroyo, head of the agency's endangered species program, said the team would work eight hours a day starting Tuesday to the close of business on Friday to sort through the comments. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne's office, according to the e-mail, will be responsible for analyzing and responding to them.

Last week's end to the public comment period initiated the review.

'Last-ditch attempt'

Democratic Rep. Nick Rahall, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, whose own letter opposing the changes is among the thousands that will be processed, called the 32-hour deadline a "last-ditch attempt to undermine the long-standing integrity of the Endangered Species program."

At that rate, according to a committee aide's calculation, 6,250 comments would have to be reviewed every hour. That means that each member of the team would be reviewing at least seven comments each minute.

It usually takes months to review public comments on a proposed rule, and by law the government must respond before a rule becomes final.

"It would seem very difficult for them in four days to respond to so many thoughtful comments in an effective way," said Eric Biber, an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law. Along with other law professors across the country, Biber sent in 70 pages of comment.

Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall told the AP on Tuesday that the short time for processing the comments was requested by Kempthorne and would set a record.

"There is an effort here to see if this can be completed" before the administration is out, Hall said. He said the goal was to have the rule to the White House by early November. In May, the administration set a Nov. 1 deadline for all final regulations.

Overruling Congress?

How fast the rule is finished could determine how hard it is to undo.

A new administration could freeze any pending rules. But if the regulation is final before the next president takes office, reversing it would require going through the review and public comment period again, which could take months and sometimes requires years.

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama already has said he would reverse the proposal. Congress also could overturn the rules through legislation, but that could take even longer. Sen. John McCain's campaign has not taken a position on the Bush administration's proposed change in endangered species regulations.

Environmentalists said the move was the latest attempt by the Bush administration to overrule Congress, which for years has resisted efforts by conservative Republicans to make similar changes by amending the law.

Criticism from environmental groups and Democratic leaders prompted the Interior Department to extend the public comment period from 30 days to 60 days.

"Somebody has lit a fire under these guys to get this done in due haste," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, executive director of Defenders of Wildlife and the head of the Fish and Wildlife Service under former President Clinton.

The Interior Department received approximately 300,000 comments over the 60-day comment

period, many critical of the changes. About 100,000 of them were form letters, Hall said.

[Click here for the original story.](#)

Federal Wildlife Agencies Ordered To Ignore Global Warming

No Review of New Greenhouse Gas Pollution for Impact on Species or Habitat

Washington, DC — Top Bush administration officials have forbidden wildlife agencies from analyzing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power-plants or any other project on species and habitat, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). These directives are designed to block the Endangered Species Act (ESA) from being used as a legal tool for addressing global warming.

In a recent series of memos, the Interior Department, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have ruled that since no single source of greenhouse gases will by itself cause detectable climate change, therefore there can be no official review of possible effects on wildlife or their habitats.

In an October 3, 2008 memo to Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, Interior Solicitor David Bernhardt concluded that there are no “indirect effects” on wildlife that can be isolated to specific greenhouse gas sources. Moreover, “cumulative effects” Bernhardt opined “are of no relevance in determining whether a proposed action ‘may affect listed species or critical habitat.’”

Similarly, in an October 10, 2008 letter, James Lecky, Director of NOAA’s Office of Protected Species, wrote that impacts on coral and other marine species as well as effects on ocean temperatures and acidity cannot be traced to any one source of greenhouse gas and therefore, no consultation under ESA is required before proceeding. While conceding the question was “an important issue of first impression that is of national

significance,” Lecky, nonetheless, reached his conclusion in one week following a request from EPA and without consulting agency scientists. In 2002, Lecky was the official whose actions led to a massive fish kill on the Klamath River, and afterwards he was promoted to his current position.

“Despite findings by their own scientists that our atmosphere is reaching the tipping point, these Bush appointees cling to circular legalisms to justify continued inaction,” stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch. “The Bush position is that the death by a thousand cuts must be endured because we cannot know how many cuts we can survive.”

Since the Bush administration was forced this spring to list polar bears as a threatened species under the ESA due to melting sea ice habitat caused by global warming, there has been a concerted effort both within and outside the White House to minimize application of this powerful law against specific projects that aggravate the effects of climate change. This posture is forcing wildlife agency officials to deliver distinctly mixed messages. On May 14, 2008, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall ordered his staff to avoid ESA consultations solely on the basis of greenhouse gas pollution. Meanwhile, on his agency website Hall has posted this statement:

“The warming of the earth, however, could potentially have more far-reaching impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat than any challenge that has come before us.”

“In listing polar bears, the Interior Department admitted that greenhouse gas-induced global warming is having undeniable effects on wildlife, yet now it is saying it cannot justify any ameliorative actions,” Ruch added. “We have already reached the point where any further addition of greenhouse gases will have indirect effects on wildlife, and humans, all over the planet.”

[Click here for the original story.](#)

Army Suspends Fort Irwin Tortoise Relocation Plans After Deaths of 90 Animals

The U.S. Army has suspended plans to relocate more than 1,000 desert tortoises from Fort Irwin expansion areas this fall and next spring because at least 15 percent of the tortoises moved earlier this year have died.

About 90 of the 556 tortoises moved in the spring are dead, mostly as a result of coyote attacks.

Army and federal wildlife officials said this week that a timeout is needed to determine how many of the tortoises, a threatened species, would have died anyway and how many deaths should be attributed to the relocation effort.

"We didn't foresee this amount of coyote predation," said Roy Averill-Murray, desert tortoise recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in a phone interview Thursday.

Fish and Wildlife granted the permit that allows the tortoises to be moved and has the power to stop the relocation or require changes to ensure the species is not jeopardized.

Biologists tracking relocated tortoises began noticing the deaths within a few weeks after the moves started, according to weekly status reports released by the Army under the federal Freedom of Information Act.

Kristin Berry, a biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, was tracking 159 of the tortoises in mid-April when she noted that five had been killed by predators and one apparently had been attacked by a predator and then run over by a vehicle. A predator tore off the front leg of another, leaving its femur exposed.

The mortality rate "is extraordinarily high for a three-week period," Berry wrote in her April 15 report.

New Training on Hold

The military wants to move tortoises from 118,674 acres the Army acquired for training maneuvers with faster-moving tanks and longer-range weaponry. About 5,000 troops rotate through the National Training Center at Fort Irwin near Barstow every month.

The Army has an \$8.5 million budget to move nearly 2,000 tortoises and track their movements and health for five years.

With the relocation on hold indefinitely, the military's training plans for the new territory also are on hold. No maneuvers will take place on the land until the tortoises are removed, said Fort Irwin spokesman John Wagstaffe.

Coyote attacks on tortoises typically are rare. But ongoing drought has reduced the coyote's normal prey -- cottontails, jackrabbits and small rodents -- so the predators are hunting tortoises throughout their California and Nevada habitats, Averill-Murray said.

Federal wildlife officials will analyze whether relocating the tortoises made them more likely to be eaten. The wildlife service will produce an official "biological opinion" before the relocations resume, Roy Averill-Murray said.

The Army training center is expanding into tortoise habitat to the south and west of the existing 1,100-square-mile base.

Of the total of more than 1,900 tortoises to be moved, Fish and Wildlife officials had expected no more than 136 to die.

About 75 percent of the 556 animals relocated a few miles south of their home range in March and April had radio transmitters that allowed biologists to determine what happened to them, Averill-Murray said. Of those, at least 90 have died. The fate of the 100-plus tortoises without transmitters is unknown.

Legal Challenge

Two environmental groups, the Center for Biological Diversity and Desert Survivors, sued the

Army and the Bureau of Land Management in July, contending that the move exposed healthy tortoises to diseased animals and placed them in a poorer-quality habitat.

Ileene Anderson, a biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity, said Thursday that the relocated tortoises are more vulnerable to coyotes and other predators because, once they are dropped off, they try to return to their homes. Under normal circumstances, they would seek refuge in their burrows, she said.

"It makes them more visible on the landscape, and it makes it easier for coyotes and other predators to spot them and kill them," Anderson said.

Averill-Murray said the relocated tortoises appear to be dying at a rate similar to resident tortoises. He agreed, though, that transplanted tortoises try to return to their original homes. A few have found their way back to the future training area, despite a fence meant to keep them out.

Wagstaffe said the relocation didn't cause all the deaths.

"If a tortoise died of natural causes, it should not be counted against the relocation," he said.

But Anderson characterized the 90 deaths as "a huge hit" on the Mojave Desert tortoise population.

The animals' populations have been shrinking because of habitat loss, disease, predation, crushing by vehicles and people taking them for pets.

The federal government considers the species threatened.

[Click here to see the original story.](#)

Western Group Petitions for Species Protection

A tortoise, a hare, a mouse and a half-dozen mussels.

These are just some of the animals and plants that a Western conservation group is seeking protections for under the Endangered Species Act as part of several in-depth petitions filed Thursday with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

WildEarth Guardians said the petitions — filed as part of its "Western Ark" project to gain protections for more species in the region — cover a diverse group of 13 plants and animals with ranges that span more than a dozen states and stretch into Mexico and Canada.

"We deliberately wanted to petition at once for a variety of plants and animals and this is to underscore that the Endangered Species Act really is like Noah's ark," said Nicole Rosmarino, wildlife program director for WildEarth Guardians. "We want as many species that are in need to board the ark as possible."

Elizabeth Slown, a spokeswoman for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Albuquerque, said officials will look over the petition to "see whether there is enough information and substantial argument for us to pursue determining whether these plants and animals should be under endangered species protection."

WildEarth Guardians reviewed the status of hundreds of species — including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates — looking for those that had the best cases for protection under the federal act.

"We really wanted a wide range just to demonstrate to the government and the public that that's what this law is all about," Rosmarino said. "The Endangered Species Act is all about protecting the rich tapestry of life."

The eight petitions filed Thursday are the latest salvo in the battle the group has been waging against the federal government over endangered species listings. WildEarth Guardians points out that the polar bear was the first U.S. species to be listed in over two years and that all of the listings under the Bush administration have been prompted by either citizen petitions or legal action.

WildEarth Guardians in the past year has petitioned for protections for hundreds of species, including prairie wildflowers, butterflies, amphibians, fishes, snails, trees and cactus.

The Fish and Wildlife Service vowed at the beginning of this year to make a dent in the backlog of species needing to be reviewed for possible ESA protection. In a step toward that goal, the agency announced last month it was taking a new, ecosystem-based approach to the endangered species list and proposing an all-at-once addition of 48 Hawaiian species to list.

Asked whether this new approach would help with petitions such as those filed by WildEarth Guardians, Rosmarino said the approach makes sense and is long overdue but the administration still has a lot of catching up to do. She added that her group will keep plugging away with petitions and legal pressure.

"If nothing else, we're going to greet the next administration with a long line of passengers that urgently need to board the ark that the Endangered Species Act provides," she said.

Nearly all the species listed in the petitions filed Thursday face a common threat of climate change, including the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, the Jemez Mountains salamander, the white-sided jackrabbit and the Sonoran desert tortoise.

The tortoise, which ranges across southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, is the focus of one petition filed jointly by WildEarth Guardians and the Western Watersheds Project. The groups say the tortoise's population has been reduced by more than half since 1987, and that urban sprawl, off-roading and grazing continue to put pressure on the species.

In addition, long droughts brought on by climate change are expected to result in less food and lower reproduction rates for the tortoise, the groups say.

Rosmarino said drought is also likely to have an impact on the white-sided jackrabbit's grassland habitat.

Without federal protection, Rosmarino said conservationists worry that the tortoise and the jackrabbit — like the other species listed in the petitions — might be lost.

She quipped that the tortoise and the hare are not racing each other but are "in a race with extinction and neither of them has an interest in winning that race."

Species listed in Western group's petitions

WildEarth Guardians has filed several petitions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seeking protections for 13 animals and plants under the Endangered Species Act. Here is a look at the species listed in the petitions:

Chihuahua scurfpea — A wide-ranging, but rare plant with only about 300 known individuals in New Mexico and Arizona. It was historically collected for medicinal use. Because of over-collection, herbicides and grazing, the scurfpea is at risk.

Jemez Mountains salamander — A lungless salamander that spends most of its life underground in the moist soils of New Mexico's Jemez Mountains. It is the most imperiled of only three salamanders that exist in the state, and threats include climate change, wildfire, road building and logging.

New Mexico meadow jumping mouse — A small rodent that depends on moist meadows along streams and rivers in New Mexico and neighboring Arizona and Colorado. Surveys show the mouse has disappeared from nearly three-quarters of the places it historically occupied. Threats include climate change, grazing and loss of habitat.

Sonoran desert tortoise — A tortoise found primarily on rocky slopes and bajadas of the Sonoran Desert in Arizona and Mexico. It's population has declined by more than half in the last two decades. Threats include urban sprawl, off-roading, grazing, disease and climate change.

Sprague's pipit — A bird that has seen nearly four-fifths of its population disappear in the last four decades. It breeds in the northern Great Plains and southern Canada and winters in the Southwest and northern Mexico. Climate change, grazing and poor water and land management are among the threats.

White-sided jackrabbit — A rabbit that was once found throughout southwestern New Mexico and southern Mexico. Surveys from 1990-1995 counted less than five of the jackrabbits per year. The rabbit depends on desert grasslands that could turn to scrub due to unchecked grazing and climate change.

Wright's marsh thistle — A plant that once ranged across wetlands in the Southwest and northern Mexico. It's now found in only five locations in New Mexico. Threats to the flowering plant include water management, herbicides, off-roading and grazing.

Freshwater mussels — The southern hickorynut, smooth pimpleback, Texas pimpleback, false spike, Mexican fawnsfoot and Texas fawnsfoot are all freshwater. They are disappearing from watersheds in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Mexico due to habitat destruction.

[Click here to see the original story](#)

Tortoise Racing Toward Extinction

Federal Protection Sought for Rapidly Declining Sonoran Desert Tortoises

Today, WildEarth Guardians and Western Watersheds Project filed a petition requesting that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) list the Sonoran desert tortoise population under the Endangered Species Act and designate critical habitat to protect the animal. The Sonoran desert tortoise population has declined by 51% since 1987.

Severe population declines were documented in a recently completed report. The study, commissioned by WildEarth Guardians, found that desert tortoise populations are declining by about

3.5% per year throughout southwestern Arizona. Although to the untrained eye they may look similar, Sonoran desert tortoises show marked genetic and behavioral differences from tortoises found in the Mojave Desert. The Mojave Desert population was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990.

“Federal protection for the Sonoran desert tortoise is long overdue. The Service needs to list this endangered creature promptly so that it can board the legal ark the Endangered Species Act provides,” stated Dr. Nicole Rosmarino of WildEarth Guardians.

“In 1990, when the Mojave population of desert tortoises was listed, the Service declined to list desert tortoises east of the Colorado River on the grounds that they were less imperiled than their Mojave cousins. The dramatic declines we’ve seen in Sonoran desert tortoise populations since then now require swift action by the federal government,” stated Dr. Michael Connor of Western Watersheds Project.

The petition catalogues many threats that contribute to tortoise declines including disease, livestock grazing, mining, urban sprawl, use of off-road vehicles, border patrol activities, and a lack of adequate legal protections. Extended drought caused by climate change is an additional threat. Biologists fear that human activities combined with environmental stress may be increasing susceptibility to two diseases that are now becoming increasingly common among Sonoran desert tortoise populations. A disease epidemic led to emergency federal protection for tortoises in the Mojave Desert in 1989. Stated Connor, “The combined assault of threats such as development, cattle grazing, and disease are pushing Sonoran desert tortoises closer and closer to extinction.”

If listed under the Endangered Species Act, Sonoran desert tortoises would be protected from “take” (including killing and harassment) of individual tortoises, and the Service would have to develop a recovery plan to map out the steps that must be taken to reverse the declines. The Service would also have to identify critical habitat required by the

tortoise so that it can be protected to aid the conservation and recovery of the species.

The Endangered Species Act requires the Service to issue an initial finding on the petition within 90 days.

“The Sonoran desert tortoise population has been slashed in half over the past two decades. The Service passed up an earlier opportunity to protect this rare reptile, and the Sonoran desert tortoise is now in a race with extinction,” stated Rosmarino.

WildEarth Guardians and Western Watersheds Project are region-wide conservation organizations with offices throughout the west including Arizona.

[Click here to see the original story.](#)

Record of Decision and Floodplain Statement of Findings--Nevada Rail Alignment for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, NV

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (Excerpt taken from the Federal Register)

DOE has complied with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Pursuant to the regulations that implement the Act (50 CFR Part 402), in March 2008, DOE submitted a biological assessment regarding the potential impacts to the threatened Mojave desert tortoise, the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher, and the threatened Ute ladies'-tresses from the construction and operation of a railroad in the Caliente corridor, and initiated consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Bureau of Land Management and the Surface Transportation Board were supporting agencies on this consultation.

On September 19, 2008, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued its biological opinion and found that construction and operation of the railroad is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the threatened Mojave population of the desert tortoise

or the Ute ladies'-tresses. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that the railroad will not result in adverse effects to the critical habitat designated for the Mojave desert tortoise, and further analysis of potential critical habitat impacts is not necessary (critical habitat for the Ute ladies'-tresses in Nevada has not been designated). The Fish and Wildlife Service also included an incidental take \12\ statement and identified reasonable and prudent measures (mitigation measures) that must be implemented by DOE to minimize take of Mojave desert tortoise, and conservation and minimization measures that must be implemented if the Fish and Wildlife Service determines that the loss of Ute ladies'-tresses by construction activities would be significant. The Department is committing to these measures, the details of which will be included in the Mitigation Action Plan.

[Click here for the entire Federal Register entry](#)

Federal Protection Sought for Rapidly Declining Sonoran Desert Tortoises

Arizona, 10/09/08: Today, Western Watersheds Project and WildEarth Guardians filed a petition requesting that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) list the Sonoran desert tortoise population under the Endangered Species Act and designate critical habitat to protect the animal. The monitored Sonoran desert tortoise population has declined by 51% since 1987.

Severe population declines were documented in a recently completed report. The study found that monitored desert tortoise populations are declining by about 3.5% per year throughout southwestern Arizona.

Although to the untrained eye they may look similar, Sonoran desert tortoises show marked genetic and behavioral differences from tortoises found in the Mojave Desert. The Mojave Desert population was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990.

“In 1990, when the Mojave population of desert tortoises was listed, the USFWS declined to list

desert tortoises east of the Colorado River on the grounds that they were less imperiled than their Mojave cousins.

The dramatic declines we've seen in Sonoran Desert tortoise populations since then now require swift action by the federal government," stated Dr. Michael Connor of Western Watersheds Project.

"Federal protection for the Sonoran desert tortoise is long overdue. The Service needs to list this endangered creature promptly so that it can board the legal ark the Endangered Species Act provides," stated Dr.

Nicole Rosmarino of WildEarth Guardians.

The petition catalogues many threats that contribute to tortoise declines including disease, livestock grazing, mining, urban sprawl, use of off-road vehicles, border patrol activities, and a lack of adequate legal protections. Extended drought caused by climate change is an additional threat. Biologists fear that human activities combined with environmental stress may be increasing susceptibility to two diseases that are now becoming increasingly common among Sonoran desert tortoise populations. A disease epidemic led to emergency federal protection for tortoises in the Mojave Desert in 1989. Stated Connor, "The combined assault of threats such as development, cattle grazing, and disease are pushing Sonoran desert tortoises closer and closer to extinction."

If listed under the Endangered Species Act, Sonoran desert tortoises would be protected from "take" (including killing and harassment) of individual tortoises and the USFWS would have to develop a recovery plan to map out the steps that must be taken to reverse the declines. The USFWS would also have to identify critical habitat required by the tortoise so that it can be protected to aid the conservation and recovery of the species.

The Endangered Species Act requires the Service to issue an initial finding on the petition within 90 days.

WildEarth Guardians and Western Watersheds Project are region-wide conservation organizations with offices throughout the west including Arizona.

The petition is available at:

<http://westernwatersheds.org/species/desert-tortoise/sonoran/sonoran-tortoise-petition.pdf>

Public Land Seizure for Military Bombing Range Threatens California Desert and Desert Tortoise

LOS ANGELES— The Bureau of Land Management has issued a Notice of Proposed Legislative Withdrawal to enable the eventual transfer of 365,906 acres of fragile public land in the Mojave Desert to the U.S. Marine Corps for bombing, tank training and other "live fire" exercises.

The lands identified by the Marine Corps for its Air Ground Combat Center training grounds near Twentynine Palms include habitat critical for survival of the threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and desert bighorn sheep. The Marine Corps says it needs the expansion for national security.

"National security doesn't require seizing and bombing public lands and threatened species habitat," said Ileene Anderson, a biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "The public needs more explanation on the need for the proposed expansion under which deserts and wildlife that are already in decline will fall victim to tank treads, heavy artillery and other destructive military activity."

Today's proposal is the latest in a string of threats to the tortoise. Having survived more than a million years in California's deserts, desert tortoise numbers are now crashing, particularly in the West Mojave, where much of the expansion would occur. The population decline is due to numerous factors, including disease, habitat degradation, crushing by vehicles, military and suburban development, and predators. Because of its dwindling numbers, the desert tortoise, California's official state reptile, is now protected under both federal and state endangered species acts. The expansion could also

lead to additional disastrous tortoise relocations. Nearly 2,000 tortoises are already being experimentally relocated for the expansion of Fort Irwin, an Army post about 25 miles north of the Marine Corps base. That effort so far has resulted in unexpectedly high tortoise mortality rates.

In August, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a new draft recovery plan that would weaken protections for the tortoise. The plan provides only vague descriptions of recovery actions — actions that are not derived from the best available science. Recently, population genetics studies have identified the desert tortoise in the western portion of the Mojave Desert as distinctly different from its relatives to the northern, eastern, and southern portions. This finding sheds new light on why increased conservation and relocation success are more important than ever for the Fort Irwin effort.

“The legacy of one million years of evolutionary history should not fall victim to our president’s failed war,” Anderson said. “Endangered species remain the Bush administration’s very lowest priority — and in its final days, the administration appears to have set its sights on speeding the desert tortoise towards extinction.”

Contact:
Ileene Anderson
Center for Biological Diversity
(323) 654-5943 (office)
(323) 490-0223 (mobile)

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national nonprofit conservation organization with more than 180,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places

Center for Biological Diversity Appeals New Illegal Vehicle Routes That Threaten Tortoise

LOS ANGELES— The Center for Biological Diversity on Monday evening appealed a Bureau of Land Management decision opening two off-road vehicle routes in desert tortoise habitat in eastern

Kern County. The Bureau’s decision allows access to sensitive lands in the Rand Mountains, an area that has suffered from rampant off-road vehicle abuse, which has inflicted catastrophic harm to the imperiled tortoise and the fragile desert ecosystem. In rendering its decision, the Bureau sidestepped public-involvement procedures required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Bureau’s decision relies on an inadequate education and permit program that provides no education and no permit tracking. The program merely requires the public to carry a one-page flyer that includes sparse information and a map of the Rand Mountain Management Area. A signature that certifies the recipient will carry the map while in the area is considered a permit. The Bureau is not retaining any information about the permittees, will not track use by permittees, and intends to provide only limited monitoring.

“The education and permit program is a joke,” said Ileene Anderson, a biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Anyone can now drive those roads, which were previously closed to protect desert tortoise. To open them now, when illegal driving has been such a chronic problem in the area, is unfathomable and dooms this area of critical environmental concern to continued environmental degradation, trash and pollution.”

The Bureau fast-tracked the opening of the routes and permit process and precluded the opportunity for the public to review and comment on the shortcomings of the flawed plan. The routes are directly adjacent to the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, private conservation lands set up to protect desert tortoise in the wild. Although the two routes recently have been fenced, rogue off-roaders have in the past cut fences and desecrated tortoise habitat.

Having survived tens of thousands of years in California’s deserts, desert tortoise numbers have in recent years declined precipitously. The crash of populations is due to many factors, including disease, crushing by vehicles, military and suburban development, habitat degradation, and predation by dogs and ravens. Because of its dwindling numbers,

the desert tortoise, which is California's official state reptile, is now protected under both federal and state endangered species acts.

Population genetics studies recently have shown that the desert tortoise in the western Mojave desert, including the Rand Mountain tortoises, is distinctly different from its relatives to the north, east and south. This finding sheds new light on why increased conservation is more important than ever for the animals in the western Mojave.

"The BLM must follow the law and protect the tortoise and its habitat from all manageable threats, which in the Rand Mountains should include keeping key habitat closed to off-road vehicles," said Anderson. "The only reason that these roads were re-opened was because members of the Bush administration on their way out the door threw the off-roaders a bone. It is not based on science, and it surely does not support the recovery of these animals, which are the bellwether of the environmental health of our deserts."

Peter Pritchard Receives the 2008 Behler Turtle Conservation Award

The IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and IUCN Turtle Survival Alliance established the John Behler Turtle Conservation Award in 2006, a major annual award presented jointly by these groups to honor leadership and excellence in the field of turtle and tortoise conservation. The award honors the memory of John Behler, previous Chair of the Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and Curator of Herpetology at the Bronx Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society.

The 3rd annual Behler Award was presented to Peter Pritchard in Tucson, Arizona, in September 2008 at the 6th Annual Symposium on Conservation and Biology of Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises. Presenting the award were Anders Rhodin, Chair of the Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, and Rick Hudson, Co-Chair of the Turtle Survival Alliance. The Award includes an

honorarium of \$3000, and co-sponsors this year were Chelonian Research Foundation, Conservation International, Chelonian Research Institute, Behler Chelonian Center, World Chelonian Trust, and Deborah Behler and Brett Stearns.

This year's honoree, Peter Pritchard, is a life-long turtle researcher and conservationist, whose work and leadership in the field have been inspirational for many. He has been recognized as a "Champion of the Wild" by the Discovery Television Channel, a "Hero of the Planet" by Time Magazine, and "Floridian of the Year" by the Orlando Sentinel. He has undertaken extensive field work with turtles in all continents and many remote islands, and he has established a permanent field station for turtle conservation in northwestern Guyana. Three species of turtle are named after him—a snake-necked turtle from New Guinea, a pond turtle from northern Burma, and a giant fossil sideneck turtle from Colombia.

For many of today's younger crop of turtle researchers his writings served as key inspirational references. Key to his broad appeal were his early seminal books, *Living Turtles of the World* (1967) and *Encyclopedia of Turtles* (1979). Other important books were *Turtles of Venezuela* (1984), *The Alligator Snapping Turtle* (1990), *Galapagos Tortoises: Nomenclatural and Survival Status* (1996), and *Tales from the Thébaide* (2007). He has also created a cinematography project entitled "The Turtle Planet," with two hour-long films, *Bostami*, *Vishnu*, and *Walter*, and *Sidenecks of Gondwanaland* having been produced in this series.

Dr. Pritchard was born in England in 1943, and was raised in Northern Ireland, relocating to Florida in 1965. He has a B.A. and M.A. in Chemistry and Biochemistry from Oxford University, and a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Florida, where he studied sea turtle biology with Dr. Archie Carr. He worked first with World Wildlife Fund, and then Florida Audubon Society, where he held various positions including Acting President. In 1998 he founded Chelonian Research Institute in Oviedo, Florida, of which he remains Director. He is also an Adjunct Professor of Biology at Florida Atlantic

University and the University of Central Florida, and lives with his wife Sibille in Oviedo, Florida.

[Click here for the entire story](#)

RELATED MEETINGS

THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL HERPETOLOGY CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the University of Florida, the Florida Museum of Natural History, and the Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Corps, the 32nd Annual Herpetology Conference will be held jointly with the 6th Annual Southeastern Ecology and Evolution Conference. We will gather 27-29 March 2009 at the Paramount Plaza Hotel & Suites Conference Center in Gainesville, Florida.

A special focus session will honor the life and work of the late Dr. Archie Carr, marking the centennial anniversary of his birth and celebrating 100 years of his impact.

For more information, contact:

Benjamin K. Atkinson
Department of Herpetology
Florida Museum of Natural History
University of Florida, P. O. Box 117800
Gainesville, Florida 32611-7800
(724) 355-5308 (cell)
bka@ufl.edu

JOB OPENINGS

TURTLE TRACK TASK

Title: Interpretive Naturalist (Full-time/Temporary):
15 March to 15 June 2009
Agency: Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.
Location: Desert Tortoise Natural Research Area
(DTNA), Kern County, California

Application Deadline: 31 December 2008

Job Description:

(A) Interpretive Services. Provide information to the public while welcoming visitors, conducting nature walks, presentations, and other educational activities.

(B) Data Collection, Entry, and Reporting. Record visitor information, patterns of visitation, maintain daily logs, record wildlife sightings, and any unusual activities. Enter data into Excel files and prepare weekly summaries for the Preserve Manager.

(C) Assist with Other DTPC Activities and Programs. Assist other DTPC personnel and volunteers as necessary to conduct activities at the DTNA or vicinity.

(D) Site Maintenance. The Naturalist shall keep the parking lot and vicinity clean and check the area for rattlesnakes and venomous spiders regularly. The Naturalist will inspect the exhibits along the trails each morning and maintain them as required.

Qualifications:

1. Familiarity with the plants and animal communities of the Mojave desert
2. Demonstrated professional/educational commitment to environmental conservation, public outreach, and/or scientific research
3. Strong interpersonal skills and ability to communicate with a diversity of interest groups
4. Basic understanding and ability to administer first-aid
5. Self-motivated and able to work independently
6. Ability to collect data with a strong attention to detail
7. Ability to enter data into Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets
8. Ability to live on-site in the DTPC's motor home at the DTNA, Kern County, California during the term of the position
9. Having and maintaining eligibility to work in the United States pursuant to federal law; along with submission of employment eligibility documentation.

To apply: Please submit a resume, a cover letter, and a list of 3 references.

Salary: \$2,900 per month/housing is provided

Contact: Melissa Nicholson
dtpc@pacbell.net (preferred)
(951) 683-3872

[http:// www.tortoise-tracks.org](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org)

SCHOLARSHIPS / AWARDS

DAVID J. MORAFKA MEMORIAL RESEARCH GRANT

In honor and memory of Dr. David J. Morafka, distinguished herpetologist and authority on North American Gopher Tortoises, the Desert Tortoise Council, with the aid of several donors, has established a monetary grant to help support research that contributes to the understanding, management and conservation of tortoises of the genus *Gopherus* in the southwestern United States and/or Mexico: *G. agassizii*, *G. berlandieri* and/or *G. flavomarginatus*.

Grant Amount: \$2,000 to be awarded at the Desert Tortoise Council's Annual Symposium, depending on the availability of funding and an appropriate recipient.

Eligibility: Applicants must be associated with a recognized institution (e.g., university, museum, government agency, non-governmental organization) and may be graduate students, post-doctoral students or other researchers. They must agree to present a report on the results of the research in which award funds were used at a future symposium of the Desert Tortoise Council.

Evaluation Criteria: Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the potential of the research to contribute to the biological knowledge of one or more of the above gopher tortoise species, and to their management and conservation. Important considerations are the significance and originality of the research problem, design of sampling and analysis, preliminary data supporting the feasibility of the research, and the likelihood of successful completion and publication.

Application Procedure:

1. Obtain an application form from the Desert Tortoise Council website (www.deserttortoise.org) or print out the form from an email notification.
2. Provide all information requested on the application, including a description of the research project in no more than 1,200 words.
3. Applications must be accompanied by three letters of recommendation, one of which must be from the applicant's research advisor, supervisor or a knowledgeable colleague. The letters must be in sealed envelopes addressed to the "Morafka Research Award Selection Committee" with the recommenders' signatures across the flaps.
4. Completed application materials must be submitted by 15 December 2008 to:

Desert Tortoise Council
P. O. Box 3273
Beaumont, California 92223
5. A research grant recipient will be selected by a committee of gopher tortoise biologists appointed by the Desert Tortoise Council Board of Directors.
6. The research grant recipient will be notified of his/her selection by 1 February 2009 and the award will be presented at the 2009 Desert Tortoise Council Symposium, 19-22 February 2009

OPINION

This opinion represents the collective opinion of the Board of Directors for the Desert Tortoise Council. Any questions can be submitted to the newsletter editor on behalf of the Board at sdaly@burnsmcd.com

The Draft Revised Recovery Plan: A Plan for Endangerment and Extinction

In 1974, an interim Recovery Team was formed to protect the desert tortoise. This initial effort, a product of a committee within the Colorado River Wildlife Council, became the Desert Tortoise Council in 1975. Since that time, the Desert Tortoise Council has strived to protect the tortoise and representative habitats through the geographic range. Members have been involved in listing packages, reports, symposia, workshops, public comments on plans and many other activities to promote the welfare of the species.

The populations in the northern third of the geographic range of the desert tortoise were listed as threatened in 1990, over 18 years. The first recovery plan, *Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan*, for tortoises occurring north and west of the Colorado River, was published in 1994. The new Draft Revised Recovery Plan, issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Desert Tortoise Recovery Office in the summer of 2008, is more than a disappointment. It is a recipe for endangerment. In our view, the new Plan does not offer improvements on the 1994 Plan; it does not bring us closer to dealing with the major threats to populations and habitat or reducing mortality. Instead it is highly likely to bring the listed populations closer to extinction. The following are but a few examples of major problems:

- The scientific foundation is deeply flawed. The scientific material, as currently presented in the Plan, is pock-marked by glaring omissions, a poor and lackluster review or synthesis of the available scientific data and publications, and incomplete models with no methods, peer review or validation. Furthermore, some important published papers are inaccurately portrayed.
- The proposed recovery actions to reduce tortoise mortality and threats to the populations and habitat are weak, weaker than those in the *Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan*. In contrast, the 1994 Plan contained a list of recommended regulations and specific activities that should be prohibited.
- The draft Plan fails to provide what is critical and essential to recovery: an aggressive implementation strategy designed to meet local and regional threats.
- The government focus on augmenting populations with head start programs (at great expense) is almost laughable, when predator management has languished and drifted virtually rudderless for more than 25 years. Predation, especially by subsidized predators, needs to be taken seriously.
- The writers of the draft Plan propose even more planning: Recovery Implementation Teams (RIT) and use of an "adaptive management program." What about the myriad of plans generated after years of public comment by states and counties following the listing of the tortoise? If the "RIT" portion of the draft Plan is not revised, implementation of critically needed protective measures will be further delayed.

We recommend that the writers pay careful attention to the comments from all concerned government, non-government organizations and scientists. The revisions should start with the 1994 Plan as a base. This time the focus should be on aggressive recovery actions that will reduce mortality and protect habitat, thereby rescuing tortoise populations from continued declines, local and regional extirpations, and ultimately scattered, non-viable populations.

Please see the following link for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Desert Tortoise Recovery Office, with full text of the draft recovery plan. [Click here for the webpage.](#)

www.deserttortoise.org

2008 SYMPOSIUM PHOTO CONTEST

The Council sponsors the annual Photo 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 of the eight categories. First Place awards will be \$50.00; second and third place winners will receive ribbons. The Best of Show will receive \$100. Awards will be presented during Saturday evening's program.

CATEGORIES:

Wild Desert Tortoises

Captive (pet) Desert Tortoises

Other Desert Reptiles

Desert Mammals

Other Desert Wildlife

Wild Desert Plants

Desert Scenics

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.

FORMAT: For 2009, the format is mounted print photographs. Prints may be either in a mat frame, or mounted on cardstock or similar weight paper to enable display. **NO GLASS PLEASE.** All prints must be labeled with the following information placed on the back: common and scientific names of subject; location; date photograph was taken, contestant's name, address and phone number; and entry category. No names on the front, please, but titles are acceptable. This year, the council requires contest entrants to provide a digital copy of the photograph as well. If you are submitting more than one photo, you can put multiple files on your LABELED disk.

OTHER RULES: The contestant must be a registered attendee of the 2009 symposium. Contestants will be limited to a maximum of three (3) entries each, with no more than one (1) per category. With the exception of Captive (pet) tortoises, all photographs must be taken of WILD (i.e. unrestrained and photographed in its natural habitat) subjects occurring **WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHIC RANGE OF THE DESERT TORTOISE.** Photographs must have been taken by the contestant.

SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES: PRINTS must be available for viewing no later than 1:30 p.m. Friday, February 20. Please bring the prints (and your electronic disk) to the symposium and turn them in at the registration table.

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 p.m. Friday to 3 p.m. Saturday. Winners will be announced at the Awards on Saturday night.

PRINTS and DISKS will not be returned 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 34th Annual Meeting and Symposium February 19-22, 2009

Return by mail to: **Desert Tortoise Council, c/o Mike Bailey, 619 Pinon Ct., Ridgecrest, CA 93555**

Return by e-mail to: <tracy.bailey@mchsi.com>

Please complete a SEPARATE form for each attendee.

Name:

(First, Last) (Name to be used on ID badge)

Organization:

Address

City:

State:

Zip:

Email:

Daytime Phone:

Payment Method: Check Online

To make your payment online, visit <<http://www.deserttortoise.org/symposium/>>
Make checks payable to Desert Tortoise Council

SYMPOSIUM FEES

ENTER AMOUNT

Member Registration	\$150.00 (\$200.00 if postmarked after 1/16/2009)	<input type="text"/>
Student Member Registration	\$60.00 (verification required, (\$85.00 after 1/16/2009)	<input type="text"/>
Non-member Registration	\$200.00 (\$250.00 if postmarked after 1/16/2009)	<input type="text"/>
One-day Registration	\$100.00 (\$140.00 if postmarked after 1/16/2009)	<input type="text"/>
Spouse (inc. breakfasts/socials)	\$50.00	<input type="text"/>
Regular Membership Dues	\$30.00	<input type="text"/>
Raffle Ticket(s)	@ \$1.00 each	<input type="text"/>
TOTAL ENCLOSED		<input type="text"/>

I would like to attend one of several Thursday, February 19, 2009, field trips:

Field Trip #1 Field Trip #2 Field Trip #3 (See newsletter for descriptions of field trips)

Print Form

Desert Tortoise Council
c/o Burns & McDonnell
3550 E. Philadelphia St.
Suite 160
Ontario, CA 91761

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

ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

_____ Regular (\$30.00 per year) _____ Organization (\$125.00 per year)
_____ Contributing (\$100.00 per year) _____ Lifetime (\$300.00 or more)
_____ Student (\$20.00 per year- Requires endorsement of student's advisor or Major Professor)

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

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