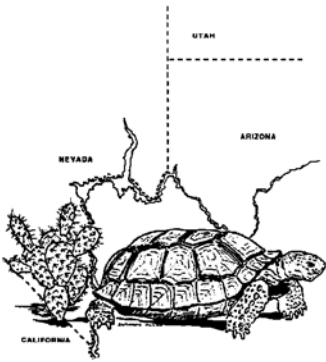


THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2008-OUR 33rd YEAR

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



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2008 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM – A GREAT SUCCESS!!!

The 33rd Annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium was held February 22 through 25, 2008 at the Sam’s Town Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Thank you to all those who attended and helped to make this yet another excellent opportunity to share the information that has been gathered over the years.

This year’s Keynote address was given by Dr. Steve Schwarzbach, Director of the Western Ecological Research Center, USGS. His presentation of, U.S. Geological Survey’s New Science Strategy – Will it Affect Desert Tortoise Research? provided a valued insight into how the desert tortoise will be affected by the strategy of the USGS for the next decade. According to Dr. Schwarzbach, there will hopefully be a renewal of resources made available for research, in addition to the development of models that will aid with data collection. Other featured speakers included Michael Fraidenburg on the importance of careers in natural resource management, Chuck Schaffer who took us on a trip through history showing us the history of turtles and tortoises throughout historical scientific manuscripts, and his son Rick Schaffer who showed us how has grown up to be fascinated with turtles and tortoises.

We had several sessions covering important topics related to the desert tortoise including:

Status Reports for Tortoises in Utah and Arizona

Government Agency Reports on Efforts to Recover the Desert Tortoise in 2007 and Plans for 2008

Plant Invasions, Effects of Fire, and Habitat Restoration

Status of the Bolson Tortoise Recovery Efforts

Progress on Health, Disease and Contaminants in Desert Tortoises

The Draft Recovery Plan, 2008

Conservation Efforts Directed towards Desert Tortoises by Non-Government Organizations

Research Findings and Recovery Efforts for Desert Tortoises in California and Arizona

This year's special interest session entitled "Climate Change in the Arid Southwest" contained fantastic presentations showing us how the global climate has changed, possible changes to come, and provided for an engaging panel session and general discussion over all about how these changes will effect the southwest, and especially how they will effect the desert tortoise.

As always, the Saturday night auction was a huge success. Thank you to all those who donated items. I think that there is a recurring theme of Don Julio tequila and turtle underwear. We also had several beautiful pieces of art and jewelry, numerous autographed books, t-shirts and more. A congratulations and a HUGE thank you to everyone who won something at the auction.

2008 Special Award Recipients

Alice Karl has been a speaker at the DTC's Handling workshop for at least 13 of the 16 years. During this time, Alice has shared her knowledge with over 1300 attendees. At the workshop, she not only presents topics on "Tortoise field surveys and data collection" and "Translocation", she's also a field instructor for tortoise handling, egg handling

and burrow construction and excavation demonstrations. We appreciate all that you do for the Desert Tortoise Council!

Up until last year, Gilbert Goodlett had been a speaker at the DTC's Handling workshop for at least 13 years. At the workshop, he presented the topic "Resource monitoring on construction projects." He has also provided and operated the audio/visual equipment for us in the past. We hope that Gilbert will continue to be a part of the DTC's Handling Workshop in the years to come.

The DTC would like to thank Ed LaRue for his continuous support with the DTC's Annual Handling Workshop. From 1994 to '98, Ed was the workshop's coordinator. Since retiring as coordinator, he's been the workshop's emcee for the past 9 years. We hope that he will continue to be a part of our workshops in the future. Thank you, Ed.

2008 Morafka Award

The award was first offered in 2006, at which time one excellent application was received and funded. In contrast to last year, when no applications were received, four applications came in for 2008. In part, this probably was due to the DTC announcing the award through the Center for North American Herpetology (CNAH), a widely used internet source of herpetological information, as well as on the DTC website and through personal contacts. The DJM Award Selection Committee, consisting of Dr. Glenn Stewart as Chair, Dr. Ken Nagy of UCLA and Dr. Robert Murphy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, felt that two of this year's applications were particularly meritorious. Considering that no award was given last year, we recommended to Sylvia Morafka, David's widow, and the DTC Board that two awards be given this year. (Sylvia and the DTC each contribute \$1,000 for the award.) Sylvia and the Board agreed, so we gave two \$2,000 awards as follows:

Akiko Fujii, a Master's Degree student at Texas State University, San Marcos, for her study entitled "Phylogeography of the Texas Tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*): Implications for Conservation and Management."

Melissa Nicholson, Office Administrator for the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and Manager of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, for her study entitled: "Comparison of Restoration Techniques within the Expanded Boundaries of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area (DTNA)."

Melissa attended the symposium and was able to receive her award in person, but Akiko was not able to obtain travel funds to support a trip to the symposium. However, both are committed to presenting the results of their research projects at future symposia

Vendors and Exhibitors

Center for Biological Diversity
1095 Market Street, Suite 511
San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone: 415-436-9682 x307
Fax: 415-436-9683
<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>
ianderson@biologicaldiversity.org

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee
4067 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside, CA 92501
Phone: 955-683-3872
Fax: 951-6836949
<http://www.tortoise-tracks.org>
dtpc@bacbell.net

Zonk Galleries
P.O. Box 11059
Oakland, CA 94611
Phone: 510-530-2681
<http://zonktheturtle.com>
davidhoobler@sbcglobal.net

Stevan Logsdon Gallery
P.O. Box 4070
Silver City, NM 88062
stevanlogsdon@zianet.com

Greenheart Gifts
5883 Stoneburrough St.
Las Vegas, NV 89113
Phone: 702-368-4684

greenheartgifts@aol.com

Upgrade Corporation (IT Services)
12127 Mall Blvd, Suite A156
Victorville, CA 92390
Phone: 760-553-2709
Fax: 773-423-1463
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info@upgradeto.com

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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 or dtcnewsletter@yahoo.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Future Annual Symposia

The symposium's location for 2009 will be the Dixie Center in St. George, Utah. Suggestions or bids for future symposia locations and venues will be gratefully accepted.

Address Updates!!!

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

Endangered Species Bulletin – 2007 Highlights

The USFWS Endangered Species Bulletin, 2007 Highlights, is now available online at the following address:

<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/bulletin.html>

“The annual highlights issue of the Bulletin contains selections from our three 2007 editions focusing on the National Fish Hatchery System, the Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program, and the Endangered Species Recovery Program, including updates and several new articles.”

VOLUNTEERS HELP MAKE 16th ANNUAL TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP A SUCCESS!

In November 2007, over one hundred students attended the DTC's workshop in Ridgecrest, CA, bringing the total 16-year enrollment to over 1500 participants.

The DTC would like to extend its sincere thanks to the donors who supported the workshop. Five companies contributed monetarily toward this highly acclaimed event. The donors listed alphabetically include:

Ms. Betty Burge
Burns & McDonnell
ECORP and Associates
Garcia and Associates.
Natural Resource Consultants, Inc.

We are further grateful to the Indian Wells Valley Water District, who for the last 13 years has provided the outdoor training area for the field surveys.

The Council would like to thank the following speakers and instructors who donated their time and effort: Kristin Berry (USGS), Ray Bransfield (USFWS), Becky Jones (CA Dept. Fish & Game), Bill and MaryAnn Hasskamp, Alice Karl (Alice Karl & Associates), Bob Parker (Ridgecrest, BLM), Greg Sharpe (JBR Environmental Consultants) who stepped in at the last minute to replace two of the speakers, Rachel Woodard, and Peter Woodman (Kiva Biological Consulting).

We would also like to thank the following volunteers who helped set-up of the outdoor plots. They include: Sharon Bliss, Mark Bratton, Bill and Mary Ann Hasskamp, John Hillman, Danna Hinderle, Dave Lyle, Bryan Reiley, Sharon Romero, and Rachel Woodard.

Finally, we would like to extend special Thanks to Mike Bailey, Jeremy Mack, and Rachel Woodard 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 c.d. "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 October 25 & 26, 2008 in Ridgecrest, CA. If you'd like to be placed on the list to receive registration information, please e-mail: tracy.bailey@mchsi.com.

NEWS

BLM Announces Intent to Revise Imperial Sand Dunes Management Plan

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), based on today's publication by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) of its final rule on critical habitat for the threatened Peirson's milk-vetch, announced it will now begin revision of its Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP).

The RAMP, approved in 2005, was set aside by a Federal Court order in 2006 and remanded to BLM for further action, as was the previous FWS critical habitat designation. Steve Borchard, BLM Desert District manager, said BLM and FWS agreed it would be in the public interest to await completion of the revised final critical habitat rule before initiating revision of the RAMP.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Borchard said BLM will soon publish in the Federal Register a notice of intent to prepare a revised RAMP and new environmental impact statement (EIS). That notice will initiate a public scoping period allowing interested parties to identify issues that should be addressed in the EIS

"We anticipate an accelerated schedule for preparing the EIS and the revised RAMP for public

review, given the tremendous amount of data and public input on the earlier documents," Borchard said. "BLM and the FWS will continue to closely coordinate on development of alternatives for the revised RAMP as we have in the past. We will be seeking the public's input as well as we embark on this planning process.

For further information concerning the BLM's Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area, visit the Imperial Sand Dunes website at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ohvs/isdra.html> or contact BLM's El Centro Field Office at 760-337-4400. For further information or to review the FWS' revised final critical habitat rule, contact the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440 or download the rule at <http://www.regulations.gov/>.

Desert Managers Group Awarded Off Highway Vehicle Green Sticker Funds

The Desert Managers Group announces the Desert Tortoise Outreach Project has been awarded a \$95,000 grant from California State Parks Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Commission. OHV grants are awarded to cities, counties, special districts, federal agencies and non-profit organizations. The Commission membership represents a broad range of disciplines relevant to offhighway vehicle recreation -- OHV recreation enthusiasts, non-motorized recreation interests, biologists, rural landowners, law enforcement, soil scientists, and environmental interests. The Desert Managers Group applied for grant funding in partnership with the State Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

<http://www.deserttortoise.gov/Documents/DMGOHVgrant.pdf>

Ray Ashton Receives Award from the Environmental & Land Use Committee of the Florida Bar for his Work on behalf of Gopher Tortoises

Ray E. Ashton, Jr., President of the Ashton Biodiversity Research & Preservation Institute, Inc., in Newberry, Florida, and one of the founders of the activist group, The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Imitative, was awarded the 2008 Citizen's Award at the 14th Annual Public Interest Environmental Conference held at the University of Florida Law School on

The award was presented for his outstanding contributions on behalf of Florida environmental and land use policy. Some of the contributions that Ashton has made include work with local county governments in developing policies that support local conservation of Gopher Tortoises and their habitats. Over the past two years, he has worked with seventeen counties to establish programs that will help protect tortoises.

Meanwhile over the past ten years, he has been a strong voice attempting to change the old policies of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission from Incidental take to one of long term management and protection through up-listing the tortoise to threatened status in Florida and to encourage relocation of tortoises to well-managed and protected lands. He has proposed reasonable financing of tortoise management that would insure perpetual monitoring and management for generations to come. He and members of The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Imitative proposed a tax exemption to landowners that maintain natural lands. Today farmers cannot maintain their agricultural exemptions on these lands and pay the highest taxes on them. Thanks to the Florida Wildlife Federation and other stakeholders, this tax bill and many changes have been brought forward to create an entirely different way of doing conservation for a species.

All though Ashton is not totally pleased with the current rules being presented to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission in April 2007, he supports the direction they are going and hope that the Commission will follow up on promises to strengthen what is being presented in the near future. If they do not then we will see a continued decline of Gopher Tortoises and the need for them to be federally listed.

Those wishing to congratulate Ray Ashton or wishing to contribute financially to the efforts of his foundation can reach him at:

Ashton Biodiversity Research & Preservation Institute, Inc.
14260 W Newberry Road, #331
Newberry, Florida 32669
www.ashtonbiodiversity.org
352-495-7449
tortfarm2@aol.com

Thai Police Sting Wildlife Dealers

Undercover Operation Nets Some of World's Most Endangered

(Bangkok, March 22)— Thai Police today conducted their largest operation on wildlife dealers this year when 40 officers raided 10 shops suspected of selling rare and endangered species in the famous Bangkok weekend market, "Chatuchak".

In an undercover sweep operation, officers from the Royal Thai Police Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Division caught a number of dealers red handed as they attempted to sell some of the world's most endangered species to undercover agents.

One dealer attempted to sell a Madagascar Ploughshare tortoise, of which there may be only 250 in the world. Adult plowshares can cost up to \$30,000 per animal, while infants cost at least \$1,000 apiece. Other dealers were caught selling slow lorises under the table. An endangered primate, the slow loris is sold to rich consumers not only in Thailand, but are also smuggled out to Japan, Russia and the United States.

The undercover operation revealed that some dealers in Chatuchak Market are part of an international network in endangered species trafficking.

Police Colonel Montree Yimyam commented that "if dealers in Thailand do not take care of wild animals and respect our laws, we will surely arrest them."

Due to the international connections that some dealers apparently have, the Thai police invited law enforcement agencies from other parts of the world to join them in their investigations. A US Special Agent was present for today's operation, expressing interest in Chatuchak dealers connections to the United States.

"Thai Police are to be congratulated for today's show of force, which demonstrates leadership in wildlife protection in Southeast Asia," said Steven Galster, Director of Operations for Wildlife Alliance. "We hope to see police agencies in other countries follow this example and join up to catch cross border wildlife criminals."

Thailand launched the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network in December 2005 and have increased wildlife crime confiscations and arrests ever since.

For more information, contact:
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Tassanee Vejpongsa Communications Officer
PeunPa Foundation (Thailand)
PeunPa Foundation Thailand (a member of Wildlife Alliance)
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Fax +662 2042722
Email : tassanee@peunpa.org
Website : www.peunpa.org

Link to Global Warming in Frogs' Disappearance Is Challenged

In the scientific equivalent of the board game Clue, teams of biologists have been sifting spotty evidence and pointing to various culprits in the widespread vanishing of harlequin frogs. The amphibians, of the genus *Atelopus* — actually toads despite their common name — once hopped in great numbers along stream banks on misty slopes from the Andes to Costa Rica. After 20 years of die-offs, they are listed as critically endangered by conservation groups and are mainly seen in zoos. It looked as if one research team was a winner in 2006 when global warming was identified as the “trigger”

in the extinctions by the authors of a much-cited paper in *Nature*. The researchers said they had found a clear link between unusually warm years and the vanishing of mountainside frog populations. The “bullet,” the researchers said, appeared to be a chytrid fungus that has attacked amphibian populations in many parts of the world but thrives best in particular climate conditions.

Other researchers have been questioning that connection. Last year, two short responses in *Nature* questioned facets of the 2006 paper. In the journal, Dr. Pounds and his team said the new analyses in fact backed their view that “global warming contributes to the present amphibian crisis,” but avoided language saying it was “a key factor,” as they wrote in 2006. Now, in the March 25 issue of *PLoS Biology*, another team argues that the die-offs of harlequins and some other amphibians reflect the spread and repeated introductions of the chytrid fungus. They question the analysis linking the disappearances to climate change.

In interviews and e-mail exchanges, Dr. Pounds and the lead author of the new paper, Karen R. Lips of Southern Illinois University, disputed each other's analysis. Experts who have researched the amphibian said neither group had enough evidence to nail down its case and warned that this normal tussle over scientific details should not distract from the reality that humans are clearly roiling biology in ways important and yet poorly understood.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/25/science/25frog.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Desert tortoise owners coming out of their shells Mandy Zajac, East Valley Tribune

The Ruhland family is used to finding wildlife on their property.

Rattlesnakes, javelinas, quail, raccoons and rabbits are ordinary visitors in their neck of northeast Mesa. They've even come home to a bobcat in the garage. Now the family is hosting another creature, one

they've welcomed to their backyard by special request.

[VIDEO: Desert Tortoise adoption program](#)

[INTERACTIVE: Tips on tortoise care, facts and how to create a backyard oasis](#)

"We adopted a desert tortoise," says Sally Ruhland. "We read up on it together all winter and got the backyard ready for her, and now she's here. She's a healthy, beautiful tortoise."

The Ruhlands are among many East Valley residents who have converted their backyards into habitats for the Arizona-native reptiles, which had been offered for adoption by Arizona Game and Fish before this spring, when the agency handed its program to the Scottsdale-based Phoenix Herpetological Society.

"There is no shortage of tortoises to adopt," says Kellie Tharp, an environmental education manager with Arizona Game and Fish. "We've typically received anywhere from 200 to 300 tortoises a year in the Valley, and all of those tortoises need homes."

Russ Johnson, president of Phoenix Herpetological Society, says his organization has about 20 tortoises now, with 30 due to arrive from Arizona Game and Fish once they come out of hibernation. Most will be adopted. "There are years we've had waiting lists," he says.

Orphans come in all year from a variety of sources: Tortoise owners die, move or can no longer care for their reptiles and return them to the agency. Others allow tortoises to breed — a serious no-no, according to Tharp and Johnson — and wind up with a dozen hatchlings that state regulations prohibit them from keeping.

[Click here for the rest of the story](#)

Warming Felt More In Western U.S.

The American West is heating up faster than any other region of the United States, and more than the Earth as a whole, according to a new analysis of 50 scientific studies. For the last five years, from 2003 through 2007, the global climate averaged 1 degree Fahrenheit warmer than its 20th century average. During the same period, 11 Western states averaged 1.7 degrees warmer, the analysis reported.

The 54-page study was released Thursday by the Rocky Mountain Climate Organization -- a coalition of local governments, businesses and nonprofits. It was based largely on calculations by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The report reveals "the growing consensus among scientists who study the West that climate change is no longer an abstraction," said Bradley H. Udall of the University of Colorado, whose work was cited in the study. "The signs are everywhere."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/asection/la-na-climate28mar28,1,3404768.story>

Elusive wolverine makes its first Sierra appearance in years

By Tom Knudson - tknudson@sacbee.com

Published 5:34 am PST Wednesday, March 5, 2008

TRUCKEE – The high school mascot in this mountain town may be the wolverine, but none of the students has ever spotted one of the elusive forest carnivores, known for their voraciousness and distaste for civilization.

Even scientists who have looked far and wide, tromping almost the entire span of the Sierra Nevada from Mount Whitney in the south to Mount Lassen up north – have found nothing. The last confirmed Sierra wolverine was shot as a scientific specimen in 1922.

Last year, a team of scientists reported that the wolverine – a chocolate-brown weasel the size of a border collie but as vicious as a grizzly bear – had apparently vanished from the Sierra long ago, squeezed out by human activity.

www.deserttortoise.org

Now one has been found in the Tahoe National Forest north of Truckee. The sighting, captured by a graduate student's remote control camera at a rustic field station, could have widespread implications for future land-use decisions ranging from logging to ski-resort expansion in the fast-growing Truckee region.

Coincidentally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently reviewing whether to place the wolverine on the endangered species list – a decision that could lead to a new round of spotted owl-style development conflicts.

Potential controversy aside, the discovery was greeted with enthusiasm around Truckee.

"Oh my goodness! That is so exciting," said Susan Lowder, a chemistry and physics teacher at Truckee High School. "So when are the grizzlies coming back? And the wolves?"

Ray Butler, a member of the Nevada County Fish and Wildlife Commission who lives in Truckee, was thrilled, too. "I'm going to have a single malt tonight," Butler said. "Other than a saber-toothed cat, this is about as good as it will ever get in California nowadays."

William Zielinski, a research ecologist with the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Field Research Station and a forest carnivore specialist, said there's little doubt the animal in the photo is a wolverine. Beyond that, not much else is known.

Scientists aren't sure, Zielinski explained, whether the animal is a bona fide Sierra Nevada native or a long-distance migrant that wandered in from the North Cascades in Washington or the Sawtooths in northern Idaho – its two closest home ranges. Another possibility, although slim, is that someone may have released a captive wolverine into the wild.

[Click here to see the rest of the story](#)

BLM Announces Intent to Prepare Joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for Calnev Pipeline Project

Calnev Pipe Line, LLC has applied for a right-of-way on public lands to expand and reconstruct 233 miles of pipeline in California and Nevada. The pipeline transports jet fuel from the North Colton terminal in Colton, California to Bracken Junction in Las Vegas, Nevada. Projected increases in commercial air traffic in and out of McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas will require significant increases in jet fuel supplies over the next 20 years. An expanded and modernized pipeline will serve that need. The project would include construction, operation and maintenance of a new 16-inch diameter pipeline from Colton to Las Vegas; new pumps, an electrical substation and other ancillary facilities to increase pumping at Colton; a new pump station, electrical substation and ancillary facilities at Baker; as well as new or modified connections to existing laterals. Pipeline construction will take place over 12 months and is anticipated to begin in late 2009 or early 2010.

A public scoping period of 60 days commenced with the publishing of the Federal Register Notice on March 13, 2008. In order to be assured inclusion in the draft EIS/EIR, written comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period on May 12, 2008 at the address identified below. The public is also invited to make comments or hear more about the project at the following public scoping meetings:

Tuesday, April 1, 2008 - Rialto Middle School, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., presentation at 6:30 p.m. 324 N. Palm Ave., Rialto, CA

Wednesday, April 2, 2008 - Victor Elementary School District, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., presentation at 6:30 p.m. (Nisqualli Room), 15115 Nisqualli Road, Victorville, CA

Thursday, April 3, 2008 - Parkdale Community Center, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., presentation at 6:30 p.m. 3200 Ferndale St., Las Vegas

During the public scoping period the BLM and county are soliciting public comment that should be considered in the analysis of the proposed action as well as the planning criteria to be used during consideration of the plan amendment. Comments may also be submitted in writing to the address listed below. Additional opportunities for public participation and formal comment will occur when the draft EIS/EIR is issued.

Comments and other correspondence should be sent to the BLM Barstow Field Office, attention Edythe Seehafer, environmental coordinator, Barstow Field Office, 2601 Barstow Road, Barstow, CA 92311 (760) 252-6021, by fax at (760) 252-6099 or by e-mail at eseehafer@ca.blm.gov. Documents pertinent to this proposal, including comments of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM Barstow Field Office during regular business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

For further information and/or to have your name added to the mailing list, contact Edythe Seehafer at the contact numbers and addresses above or Carrie Hyke, AICP, principal planner, San Bernardino County, Advance Planning Division, 385 N. Arrowhead Ave., First Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0182, Tel. 909-387-4147.

**CONSERVATION AND HEALTH GROUPS
PETITION FOUR SOUTHERN STATES TO
END COMMERCIAL HARVEST OF
FRESHWATER TURTLES**

Conservation and health groups are seeking to end unsustainable commercial harvest of freshwater turtles in four southern states and to stop the export of contaminated turtles to international food markets. The Center for Biological Diversity today filed emergency petitions with the states of Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Texas to ban commercial turtle harvesting in public and private waters, to prevent further population declines of native southern turtle populations, and to protect public health. Turtles collected in these states and sold as

food are often contaminated with mercury, PCBs, and pesticides.

Wildlife exporters and dealers are commercially harvesting massive and unsustainable numbers of wild freshwater turtles from Oklahoma, Florida, and Georgia, the few southern states that continue to allow unlimited and unregulated take of turtles. Herpetologists have reported drastic reductions in numbers and even the disappearance of many southern species of Map Turtles (genus *Graptemys*) in Georgia and Florida, especially in the panhandle. Recent surveys by Oklahoma State University show depletions and extinction of freshwater turtles in many Oklahoma streams, and commercial turtle buyers in Oklahoma reported purchasing almost 750,000 wild-caught turtles from 1994 to 1999. Over a quarter million wild-caught adult turtles captured in Texas were exported from the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport to Asia for human consumption from 2002 to 2005.

“Unregulated commercial trappers are capturing appalling numbers of freshwater turtles in southern states, including rare map turtle species that are so depleted they may need protection under the Endangered Species Act,” said Jeff Miller, conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Collectors could legally harvest every non-protected turtle that exists in the wild under the inadequate regulations that currently exist in Florida, Georgia and Oklahoma. These turtles are an important part of aquatic ecosystems and should not be allowed to be wiped out.”

Most wild turtles harvested in the southern United States are exported to supply food markets in Asia, primarily China, which has depleted or driven most of its native freshwater turtles to extinction in the wild. Numerous southeastern turtles are sold to Asian seafood markets in the United States as well. Many of these turtles are harvested from streams under state and federal fish advisories and bans that caution against and prohibit human consumption, due to aquatic contaminants that are carcinogenic or harmful to humans such as DDT, PCBs, pesticides, mercury and other heavy metals. Turtles live longer and bioaccumulate considerably greater amounts of aquatic contaminants than fish, particularly

Common Snapping Turtles and Softshells that burrow in contaminated sediments.

“Hundreds of thousands of wild-caught turtles are sold locally as food or exported to international food markets from southern states each year, many contaminated with dangerous levels of mercury, PCBs, and pesticides,” said Miller. “The potential health implications are staggering.”

Click here for the rest of the story...

<http://www.cnah.org/news.asp?id=435>

RELATED MEETINGS

The Turtle Survival Alliance will host the 6th Annual Symposium on Conservation and Biology of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles

Announcement and Call for Papers

17 – 20 September 2008, Tucson, Arizona

Joint Annual meeting of the Turtle Survival Alliance and IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group

The Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) and the IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG) are pleased to announce the dates of their joint Symposium, Wednesday - Saturday September 17 - 20, 2008 in Tucson, Arizona. This is the 6th annual conference hosted by the TSA, and has become the largest gathering of non-marine turtle biologists and captive breeding specialists in the world.

Tucson is in the Sonoran Desert, an absolutely stunning location with rich cactus forest, rolling hills and awe-inspiring mountains. It is home of the giant saguaro cactus, an iconic symbolic of the American West. This time of year rewards travelers with dry days in the 70s and 80s and nights in the 40s or 50s. The summer rainfall is just finishing, and the desert should be particularly beautiful. The Sonoran Desert harbors 60 mammal species, 350

bird species, 20 amphibian species, 100+ reptile species, 30 native fish species, and more than 2000 native plant species. Hiking, bird watching, museums, and great dining are all within easy access of Tucson. The city is bordered north and south by Saguaro National Park.

Conference planning is still underway, but rest assured that we are working hard to keep costs down while improving the quality of your conference. Based on the recent survey results, this year's conference will feature hands-on demonstrations and workshops, concurrent sessions including a full day captive husbandry symposium, and more time for socializing. Post workshop field trips are also being planned. Once again, we are grateful for the generous support of our conference title sponsor, ZooMed. This promises to be a major international conference, with over 70 presentations, another exciting and memorable icebreaker (Wed evening, 17 Sept), Mexican dinner with Live Auction (Friday, 19 Sept) and the Banquet and Award Presentation (Saturday, 20 Sept). For the third year the TSA and TFTSG will present the Behler Turtle Conservation Award, and Chelonian Research Foundation will sponsor the annual award for best student papers and posters.

Hotel and registration information will be posted by late April on our web site at www.turtlesurvival.org

Call for Papers

The following symposia will be featured and others will be added later:

•Veterinary topics: Sam Rivera (SRivera@zoatlanta.org) and Greg Fleming (greg.fleming@disney.com), chairs.

•Field Conservation Programs: Rick Hudson (RHudson@fortworthzoo.org), chair.

•Reintroduction and Recovery Programs: Rick Hudson, chair

•Husbandry: Paul van der Schouw (chelidman@tampabay.rr.com), Cord Offerman (puravida@gvtc.com), Dwight Lawson

www.deserttortoise.org

(DLawson@zooatlanta.org, and Cris Hagen (hagen@srel.edu), chairs.

•TCF-funded projects: Anders Rhodin (RhodinCRF@aol.com) and Hugh Quinn (DoubleHQ@aol.com), chairs

•Turtle Conservation and Research in the Southwest: Brian Horne, chair. (BHorne@sandiegozoo.org)

Those interested in speaking or presenting a poster should contact Conference Program Chairman Don Boyer (DBoyer@sandiegozoo.org) or one of the session chairs listed above.

The deadline to submit proposals for presentations is June 30th 2008. Please include: (1) title, (2) authors (indicate presenting author) with addresses, (3) a brief abstract (not to exceed 250 words), (4) preference for Oral or Poster presentation, and (5) indicate if you are a Student (or within one year of finishing your studies). Student presentations are only eligible for awards if the student is sole or senior author. Submit to the Program Chair, Don Boyer (DBoyer@sandiegozoo.org). Presenters will be notified of the status of their proposed presentation by July 30th 2008. Extended abstracts will be requested for publication in the conference proceedings later in the year. Presentations will be 15 minutes in length including introduction and questions. Microsoft PowerPoint is preferred, but presenters with slides will be accommodated.

This year's poster session will be coordinated by Beth Walton. Those interested in presenting a poster should contact her for details (walton.beth@yahoo.com).

Vendor booths are available for \$250 and those interested in vendor space, or in sponsoring a particular event or speaker, should contact Conference Chairman Lonnie McCaskill (Lonnie.McCaskill@disney.com) for more information.

Southwest PARC Annual Meeting – Austin, TX 6/5/2008 - 6/8/2008

The 2008 SW PARC meeting is being held in conjunction with the Horned Lizard Conservation Society (HLCS) and Texas Herpetological Society (THS) partners. The Joint SW PARC-HLCS-THS meeting will take place in Austin, Texas, on 5-8 June 2008.

This year's meeting theme is Herpetofaunal Conservation on Private Lands, although many diverse reptile, turtle and/or amphibian conservation issues will be discussed. An agenda can be downloaded from

<http://chelydra.unm.edu/swparc/meetings.html>

The meeting is open to anyone interested in reptile, turtle, or amphibian conservation in the southwestern U.S., Hawaii or Mexico. State and federal agencies, tribes, researchers, enthusiasts, zoos, museums, non-profit or conservation organizations, private sector or industry representatives are all welcome and encouraged to attend.

Early registration is \$50 for students and \$65 for professionals. Single day registration is also available for \$30. Registration includes breaks Thursday, Friday and Saturday, a hosted social/poster session with refreshments on Friday evening and lunch on Saturday.

Please visit the web site below for details on the agenda, meeting location, hotels, registration, call for abstracts, sponsors and exhibitors.

Please contact Gad Perry at gad.perry@ttu.edu if you have any questions or need registration forms.

Paulette Conrad
Nevada Department of Wildlife
<http://chelydra.unm.edu/swparc/>

JOB OPENINGS

Chelonian Curator/Animal Care Manager

A curator and animal care manager is needed for a turtle and tortoise conservation center in southern California. The center currently houses over 300 animals of 25 species from around the world, and is actively breeding only sensitive species. The utmost effort is given to provide the animals with conditions as similar as possible to those of their native habitats. Currently, the center is involved in preserving and protecting threatened turtle/tortoise habitat in the wild.

Qualifications include:

Advanced knowledge of tortoise and turtle biology and care. Organizational skills. Good communication skills.

Responsibilities include: Animal care and monitoring. Daily recordkeeping of the status and welfare of the animals. Facility maintenance and operations. Overseeing research projects. Database and website maintenance. Management of staff. General administrative duties.

In addition to the daily maintenance and care of the animals and the facility operations, the manager will be responsible for overseeing research projects that are supported by the center. There also is the opportunity to conduct research and produce publications, which is encouraged by the center.

To apply, by email only please, send a cover letter and CV to rodriguesm@behlerconservation.org

Field Museum Curatorship

ASSISTANT CURATOR OF HERPETOLOGY
FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Department of Zoology of The Field Museum seeks a herpetologist to fill a career-track appointment at the Assistant Curator level. Applicants should have a PhD at the time of appointment and have demonstrated scientific

achievement in collections-based research.

Candidates are expected to establish an externally funded research program in evolutionary biology with emphasis in areas such as biogeography, comparative morphology, conservation, development, molecular genetics, systematics, and theoretical phylogenetics. Both recent graduates and individuals with several years of experience at the assistant curator/professor level are encouraged to apply. In addition to research, responsibilities include curation of globally important collections in the Division of Herpetology, participation in public exhibit and education programs, and administration. Strong relationships with local universities provide opportunities for participation in graduate and undergraduate training and teaching.

Applications should include: (1) a Curriculum Vitae; (2) a statement of research interests; (3) a statement of curatorial interests; (4) names and contact information of three referees; and (5) copies of up to five relevant publications.

Review of applications will begin 30 June 2008.

Application materials should be sent to:

zoologysearch@fieldmuseum.org

or

Search Committee
Department of Zoology
The Field Museum
1400 South Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60605-2496

Electronic submissions are encouraged and preferred (receipt will be acknowledged).

The Field Museum is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages applications from women and minorities.

Desert Tortoise Council Membership
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 (**\$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