

The Desert Tortoise Council Newsletter Fall 1997

OUR 22nd YEAR

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

ANNUAL DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM UPDATE: 1998

The 23 Annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium is scheduled for Friday, April 3 through Sunday, April 5, 1998 at the InnSuites Hotel in Tucson, Arizona. A field trip will be scheduled for Monday, April 6, 1998. InnSuites is located at 475 N. Granada, just off Interstate 10. There are more than one InnSuites in Tucson, so make sure you mention the address correctly.

The room rate is \$69 + tax, single or double occupancy, about \$10 under government per diem. 110 rooms have been blocked for the Desert Tortoise Council at the above rate. You must mention you are with the Desert Tortoise Council Symposium to get this rate. InnSuites has a toll free reservations number, (800) 446-6589. You must make your own reservations with InnSuites. The block of 110 rooms will be released 30 days prior to the Symposium. At that time, your attempts to make reservations will be based upon availability and at the hotel's normal rate.

Check in time is 3:00 p.m., check out, 12:00 noon. Many nonsmoking rooms are available (ask). Rooms come with a variety of amenities. Popcorn and juice is available the first night in all rooms. Coffee makers and complimentary coffee and tea are provided in all rooms. All rooms are equipped with refrigerators and microwaves. Voice mail and ironing boards... and irons are available. A complimentary breakfast buffet and social (cocktail) hour are included with your room. Hair dryers are in each room and an Olympic sized swimming pool beckons the guest. InnSuites is close to downtown and 6 blocks from the charming historic arts and presidio district. It is 8 miles from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Old Tucson, and Saguaro National Park-- West Unit. InnSuites is also 5 minutes from the University of Arizona. The InnSuites MAY have a shuttle from airport by the time of the symposium, but there is no guarantee this will be the case. \$22 is the typical cab fare from the airport, or \$17 for a shuttle service called Arizona stagecoach. InnSuites is about 20 minutes from the airport. Also relatively easy and cheap (\$0.85) is the Sun Tram (city) bus ride from the airport with one transfer to get

to the hotel. Take bus 25 to Ronstadt [yes, same family as Linda] Transit Center and walk or take bus 21,12, or 3 to get to InnSuites.

CALL FOR PAPERS, REGISTRATION INSIDE THIS ISSUE

You must register to attend. Preregistration as a member is the best value.

ONGOING COUNCIL PROJECTS

This fall, your Council representatives: completed detailed recommendations after extensive field work and intensive data-gathering on the Ord-Rodman off-highway vehicle pilot project for the West Mojave Plan in California; are mid-way through updating Answering Questions About Desert Tortoises: A Guide for People Who Work With the Public. The new version will encompass both the Mojave and Sonoran desert tortoises, and should be a useful sourcework for Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and California. We intend to print many thousands copies and also make it available on our world wide web site; is progressing on a World Wide Web site which should be running in the new year; is completing a brochure on the Desert Tortoise Council, Inc.; is providing comments on a variety of agency projects affecting the desert tortoise.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT NEWS

The following comes from Environmental Policy Update, a service of the Ecological Society of America.

On September 30, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a meeting to mark up S. 1180, a bill to reauthorize the Endangered Species Act. While it is known that many controversial amendments are waiting in the wings, none were voted on during the meeting. Authors of the amendments have said that they will wait until the bill comes to the Senate floor before offering them. However, there were several, less-controversial amendments that were approved by the committee, including: an amendment to provide emergency exemptions from ESA, for situations such as pipeline leaks. Proponents say this will allow for better prompt response. Opponents say that the bill already contains adequate measures.

an amendment to provide for habitat conservation insurance to be used if a habitat conservation plan needed to be rewritten. This would free property owners from any additional costs incurred because of a rewrite. an amendment to review all recovery plans on a five-year cycle.

Major battles still loom over property rights and water rights. Either of these issues could prove to be deal killers. Also, while the Administration generally supports the legislation, there is concern that the Fish & Wildlife Service will not receive adequate funding down the road to undertake all of the new responsibilities assigned by the bill.

There is no schedule for full Senate action. In fact, it is very likely that the bill will not be considered this session.

NEW SCARY GRAZING BILL

The following is from Outdoor News Bulletin, issued by the Wildlife Management Institute.

There seems no end to the desire of some in Congress to disenfranchise the public from public lands. The latest affront to taxpayers is H.R. 2493, the so-called Forage Improvement Act, introduced by Congressman Bob Smith (OR). that bill would put public land livestock grazing permittees in charge of managing federal rangelands. It gives short shrift to the public that owns those lands and the vast majority of livestock producers in this country who do not have access to public land grazing and the ridiculously low fees with which fiscally conservative members of Congress astonishingly and routinely subsidize their public land graziers. Smith's bill excludes the public from coordinated resource management practices on federal rangeland. Only livestock permittees could participate. that means that the \$20 million contributed by groups to the U.S. forest Service each year for fish and wildlife improvement projects would cease. The bill would allow a permittee to disregard grazing restrictions in an allotment management plan or a grazing permit. And it would require that a permit be automatically reissued to a permittee as long as the allotment is available for livestock grazing, regardless of whether the permittee abides by the conditions of the permit. Under Smith's bill, a permit must be reissued even if the permittee illegally ran twice the number of livestock on an area as the permit allows. Finally, it would lock in grazing fees at rates less than what eastern livestock

producers pay in county property tax on their private land. That is grossly unfair to the vast majority of livestock producers nationwide. The American people had best wake up to these continual attempts at raiding their public land and resources for private gain. If not, one day, some of this "laughing" legislation may sneak through. Then it wouldn't be so funny.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND POSTERS -- 1998 23rd ANNUAL MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM

The Desert Tortoise Council will host its Twenty-third Annual Symposium on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, April 3-5, 1998 at the InnSuites Hotel, 475 N. Granada, Tucson, Arizona. Titles and Abstracts for Sessions or Contributed Papers and Posters are Hereby Invited. Our principal topics of interest for 1998 include: papers dealing with desert tortoise research, management, and recovery; trends in populations and habitat; success of mitigation measures; breeding programs; and general biology, ecology, physiology, health, disease, and predation. We welcome pertinent papers on turtle and tortoise biology and conservation in general and will include them if time permits.

Please return the attached form with a Proposed Title by December 12, 1997. Abstracts must follow by January 14, 1998. They should be substantive, focused on findings and implications of findings (not methods). Abstracts for 15 minute papers should be limited to 250 words (body, not title and addresses) and double-spaced. Capitalize and center the title; underneath the title, list and center all authors (include first names) with affiliations and addresses. Underline all scientific names and statistical notations. Send ONE COPY of the abstract on 8 x 11.5 inch paper or virus-free ONE 3.5 inch DISK (IBM WORDPERFECT 6.0 only) or email (kristin_berry@usgs.gov) to Dr. Kristin Berry, Symposium Chair. The Symposium Chair must be informed immediately if a cancellation or substitution is necessary. Speakers should be prepared to give professional papers. Most papers will be scheduled at 15-minute intervals (12 minutes for presentation, 3 minutes for questions), unless other arrangements are made. Authors planning to publish in the Desert Tortoise Council Proceedings need to follow the Guidelines for Authors printed in this newsletter.

Posters will be displayed through the meetings. Poster presentations may be offered at specific times. If you have questions about your paper or need assistance, please contact the Symposium Chair, Dr. Kristin Berry, at the U. S. Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division, Box Springs Field Station, via voice mail (951-697-5361) or FAX 951 697-5299 with cover sheet. Information should be exact, because the program copy will be prepared from this sheet. If your title and the speaker list is tentative, say so.

Paper _____ Student Paper _____
Poster _____

Author(s) and Affiliations (s). Indicate speaker with an asterisk.

Title of Paper.

Address of Speaker.

Phone (work) _____ Home
phone _____

Special needs (e.g., AV equipment):

Time: _____

Mail to: Dr. Kristin H. Berry, Symposium Chair, Desert Tortoise Council, 7006 Westport Street, Riverside, California 92506

ESA AMENDMENTS REPORTED

According to the Wildlife Management Institute, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works has approved S. 1180, which would amend and reauthorize the Endangered species Act. The measure, supported by the Administration, would focus attention on species "recovery" rather than listing. S. 1180, sponsored by senators Dirk Kempthorne (ID) and John Chafee (RI), encourages the '93 multi-species '94 approach to recovery. It calls for preventing endangerment rather than getting involved after the fact. It provides '93 certainty '94 for landowners who agree to consider endangered species in managing private land...i.e., once a plan is agreed to, the government could not burden the landowner with new requirements.

The bill removes what sponsors call "disincentives" to protecting habitat for endangered species. The current act, it is said, inadvertently encourages landowners to destroy endangered species habitat because of potentially costly restrictions on the use of private property.

S. 1180 increases state input into endangered species conservation and requires that the best available scientific and commercial data be used in listing and delisting critical habitat. It establishes a process for peer review for all listings and delistings. It creates a new Section 5 on recovery plans that includes: A schedule for development; that development be by a team; and that plans have specific goals that, when reached, will trigger delisting.

The bill would amend the consultation process, allowing federal land management agencies more flexibility to make determinations, rather than waiting on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service, as required by current law. It also would authorize "habitat reserve agreements," under which the federal government would pay private landowners to carry out the terms of a consensus agreement to protect endangered species. A vote on S. 1180 by the full Senate is expected within a few weeks.

BEST STUDENT PAPER AWARD

The presenter must give notice to the Program Chair of his/her student status at the time the Abstract is received. To qualify as a student, the person must be enrolled at a college or university in a degree program. Student status must be affirmed by a note from the student's major professor or advisor and must accompany the Abstract. Award will be in the amount of \$200 and will include a certificate. The Award will be based on the following factors: 1) Value of content toward furthering knowledge of desert tortoise biology; 2) Quality of content; 3) Quality of oral presentation; and 4) Quality of visual presentation.