**CALL FOR PAPERS AND POSTERS:**

 **51st ANNUAL MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM!**

In-person and Hybrid Meeting: February 25, 26, and 27, 2026

The Desert Tortoise Council will hold a virtual and in-person meeting at the Palace Station Hotel and Casino, 2411 W. Sahara Ave., Las Vegas, NV, preceded by a field trip on the 24th. If the situation regarding Covid-19 and other health issues change, we will be flexible and keep you informed.

**Titles and abstracts for sessions or contributed papers and posters are hereby invited.** The Council welcomes special sessions, pertinent papers, and posters summarizing short- and long-term research, future challenges, past accomplishments, and progress reports on significant topics for *Gopherus agassizii,* *G. morafkai, G. evgoodei,* and *G. flavomarginatus*. Papers and posters on the 4 species, desert habitats, restoration research, and other species living in desert ecosystems are welcome, as time permits. Please return the form below with abstract by **November 1, 2025.** *If necessary,* ***final abstracts*** *can be submitted as late as December 15, 2025; however, the form below must be submitted by November 15, 2025, to ensure participation*.

**ABSTRACTS**

Content is to be substantive, focused on findings and implications of findings (not methods unless the paper or poster is about techniques). Abstracts for 15-minute papers should be 250 to 300 words (body, not title and addresses) and single-spaced as described on the following page. Abstracts may be longer, especially for featured, invited, and plenary speakers.

Submission: Send a virus-free file by e-mail using Word for Windows or later version for PC. ALL e-mail transmissions must include all the information requested below in the format required, including author's address, phone, and e-mail address. If this format presents problems for you, please contact Dr. Hughson (email: debralhughson@gmail.com) and she will assist you. E-mail transmissions must include information on intent to submit by November 15, 2025, with abstract or with the final abstract to arrive by December 15, 2025. Submissions should be sent electronically with the abstract attached in the required format (not pdf). The Program Chair must be informed immediately if a cancellation or substitution is necessary. If submission is not in the required format, it will be returned for modification.

**PAPERS**

Speakers should be prepared to give professional presentations. Most papers will be scheduled at 15-minute intervals (12 minutes for presentation, three minutes for questions), unless other arrangements are made or if the paper is part of a special panel or session. If the speaker wishes to give a shorter or longer paper, then that information should be noted on the form. Keynote, Plenary, Invited, and Featured Speakers will be allotted additional time and more lengthy abstracts.

**POSTER SESSION**

Posters will be placed on easels no later than 09:30 a.m. on the first day of the meeting and on the Desert Tortoise Council’s website. After the poster abstract is provided to the Program Chair, Dr. Maggie Fusari contact you about size and arrangements for placing your poster on easels and the Council’s website. Authors must be available for questions for a special poster session(s) on a date(s) to be determined. Effective posters need to be carefully edited to avoid using too many words and too fine a print.

Information on the submittal forms must be exact, because the program copy will be prepared from the submitted sheet. If your title and list of speakers are tentative, say so. If you have questions about your paper or need assistance, please contact the Program Chair, Dr. Kristin Berry, at kristin\_berry@usgs.gov.

Paper \_\_\_\_\_ Student Paper \_\_\_\_\_\_ Poster \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Title of Paper/Poster

Address of Speaker

Preferred phone number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Special requirements (e.g., AV equipment): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**SUBMIT TO:** Dr. Kristin H. Berry, Program Chair, via email: kristin\_berry@usgs.gov AND to Dr. Debra Hughson, DebraHughson@gmail.com who is assisting.

**REQUIRED FORMAT FOR ABSTRACTS FOR PAPERS AND POSTERS WITH EXAMPLE**

To improve understanding of submission format, additional instructions are provided for the 2026 symposium.

Typeface and font: Use only Times New Roman 12-pint font. Assuming you are using Microsoft Word, first select normal margins, then go to Home and click on paragraphs, then Indents and Spacing. Spacing is where most frequent errors occur. Go down in the box and you will see Spacing; set both Before and After at 0 pt, then set Line Space at single space. By taking these steps, multi-spacing problems will be avoided.

Typeface and font: Title, authors, and body of abstract must be in Times New Roman 12-point font. Use only Times New Roman 11-point font for affiliations.

 Spacing: Single space throughout. Do not use multi-spacing.

Paper or Poster: At the top of the page, identify whether paper, student paper, or poster (PAPER, STUDENT PAPER, POSTER)

Student Papers: If the author is submitting a student paper for competition, place Student Paper in capital letters above the title. Similarly, Posters must be identified, above the title.

Title: Space down one line and center the title, capitalizing important words; place in bold.

Names of Authors: Skip one line, then center and list names of all authors in italics (include first names or initials). If there is more than one author and more than one than one affiliation, use a numerical superscript after name of authors. Otherwise, if multiple authors are from the same institution and location, no superscripts are necessary. If the speaker is not the first person listed, then place an asterisk after the last name (only if the speaker is not the first person listed).

Affiliations: On the line below the authors and still centered, affiliations and addresses, and, at minimum, e-mail address of senior author. Superscripts to identify the relationships between authors and affiliations should be placed after the names of the authors and for affiliations, immediately in front of each affiliation and address. Affiliations will be shortened in the program but should provide detailed information in the abstract, allowing for contact from interested parties.

Text of Abstract. Leave a single space and begin the text of the abstract. Italicize all scientific names and statistical notations. For abstracts on scientific research, consider writing objectives in first sentence, followed by a sentence on methods. Then write about the results and close with conclusions or potential implications for management. When finished, justify the text of the abstract only and follow by placing the affiliations in 11-point font. The purpose of these detailed instructions is to provide consistency in abstracts, reduce workload the Board, and save printing costs.

Submissions that do not meet the required format described above will be returned to the senders for revision.

**Example:**

**POSTER**

**Hot Spots & Cold Shoulders: How does Familiarity Affect Behavior & Burrow Use of Hatchling Desert Tortoises?**

*Talisin T. Hammond 1,3†, Thomas Radzio 1†, Tristan Walter 2, and Melissa J. Merrick 1*

1San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, 15600 San Pasqual Valley Rd., Escondido, CA, 92027, USA.

2Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior, Department of Collective Behavior,

Universitätsstr. 10, 78464 Konstanz, Germany

3Email: thammond@sdzwa.org; *†* These authors both contributed equally

Often described as asocial organisms, the degree to which desert tortoises recognize and benefit from knowing neighbors, clutch mates, and related individuals is often overlooked. Previous work suggests that even “asocial” species differ in their interactions with familiar and unfamiliar conspecifics, and that these dynamics can impact conservation and management efforts, including translocations. This study aims to characterize the impacts of familiarity on behavioral interactions between hatchling desert tortoises. We conducted three behavioral assays on pairs of head-started, hatchling tortoises. In the first trial, tortoises were paired with either unfamiliar (non house mates) or familiar (house-mates) individuals in a small arena for 10 minutes and activity, inter-individual distances, and the amount of time tortoises spent facing each other was monitored. In the second trial individuals were given access to a larger arena with two warmed burrows and the same metrics, as well as burrow use and burrow sharing behavior, were monitored over the course of an hour. The third trial was the same as the second trial, except that one burrow was warmed and the other was un-warmed. All trials were filmed and machine vision software, trex, was used to track tortoises and collect data. We hypothesized that familiarity would alter behavior, predicting that familiar individuals would be more willing to share burrows than strangers, particularly in the case where there was only one high quality (warmed) burrow, and that across trials inter-individual distances would be lower for familiar than unfamiliar pairs. We documented significant differences based on familiarity of pairs in inter-individual distances and burrow sharing behavior, but not orientation behavior. All pairs shared burrows to some extent, but familiar pairs with access to only one warmed burrow were most likely to burrow share. We interpret our findings in the context of optimizing translocation methods for young desert tortoises.