

## Awards Committee

**Approval Date:** draft of August 5, 2013; revised August 17, 2013

**Authority and Responsibilities:** The Awards Committee is responsible for recognizing individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the conservation and/or knowledge of desert tortoises and their habitat, or to achieving the goal and objectives of the Council.

**Bylaws, Article VI, Section 5.** Awards Committee. The Awards Committee shall be composed of at least three active members of the Council.

Obligation. It shall be the responsibility of this committee to recommend to the Board a recipient of the Council's Annual Award. This award may be to a person or organization that has made a significant contribution to the conservation and/or knowledge of desert tortoises, or to achieving the goal and objectives of the Council. The Board may also establish other awards as deemed appropriate. Recommendations for recipients of awards shall be provided by the Awards Committee with input from the Council membership. All expenses shall have the prior approval of the Board.

**Operating Procedures for Regular Awards:** Each year, based on their own suggestions, and input from other Board members and members of the Council at large, the committee develops a list of nominees for the several award categories. Ideally, these nominations are finalized by December of the year preceding the next Symposium and presented for final consideration at the January Board meeting preceding that Symposium. Any of the awards may have multiple nominees/recipients in a given year, though this is more often the case with Service, Research and Special Awards. Also, award recipients may receive the same award or other awards multiple times, based on their merits over the years. The committee maintains a list of all award recipients since the first award presentation in 1977. Prior to the Annual Business Meeting, the committee chairperson will provide a written report to the Chairperson of the Board, identifying the members of the committee and summarizing the recommendations of the committee during the previous year.

**History:** The number and categories of awards have varied over the years. However, the Annual Award has been given every year since 1977. It was the only award given from that year through 1991. In 1992, a Special Achievement Award also was given. Special Awards began to be presented in 1994, and from that year through 2000, other awards occasionally were given, including Certificates of Merit or Achievement and Conservation Awards. The Research Award was first presented in 2000 and the Service Award in 2003. Beginning in 2003, the consensus within the Awards Committee was that it would be best to limit the categories to a small number, with the understanding that new categories could be established by the Board when deemed appropriate. At that time, the list of award categories for which nominees were regularly sought, though not always identified, was: Annual, Service, Research and Special.

In 2010, the Board decided to name some of its awards in honor of certain Council members who have contributed much to the Council and desert tortoise conservation. The prefix Kristin H. Berry was added to the Annual Award; Robert C. Stebbins to the Research Award; and Glenn R. Stewart to the Service Award. A new award honoring the memory of Pat von Helf was established in 2011 (Pat von Helf Recognition Award) and first presented in 2012. Also in 2012, the name of James A. St. Amant, one of our three founders, was added to the Special Award (James A. St. Amant Special Award).

Prior to 2010, a description of the awards (essentially the criteria for them) had not been written. Descriptions were prepared by the Awards Committee and approved by the Board in 2010, with the description of the Pat von Helf Recognition Award being written and approved in 2011. The descriptions of these five awards are as follows:

**Kristin H. Berry Annual Award:** This is the Council's oldest and most prestigious award. It recognizes an individual or organization that has made especially significant or unique contributions to the conservation and/or knowledge of desert tortoises, or to achieving the goal and objectives of the Council over the long term.

**Robert C. Stebbins Research Award:** This award recognizes an individual who has an outstanding record of research, in any of a number of scientific disciplines, which contributes to the understanding of desert tortoises and/or desert ecosystems and their biota.

**James A. St. Amant Special Award:** This award recognizes an individual or organization that has made outstanding or unique contributions to the conservation of desert tortoises and/or the desert environment.

**Glenn R. Stewart Service Award:** This award recognizes a member of the Council or an organization that has demonstrated a continuing commitment to the goal and objectives of the Council and/or served with distinction in various roles.

**Pat von Helf Recognition Award:** This award is made in memory of Pat von Helf, a teacher and long-serving Corresponding Secretary of the Council, to an individual or group that exemplifies Pat's long-term, humble service to the Council and/or dedication to the education of people of all ages about desert tortoises and/or the desert environment.

### **Best Student Paper Award**

**Operating Procedures for Best Student Paper Award:** Presentations eligible for the Best Student Paper Award must be based on original research conducted by an undergraduate or graduate student enrolled in a recognized community college or university. Graduate students must be enrolled in either a Master's or Doctoral program. Individuals who already hold a doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D., D.V.M, M.D.) are not eligible.

A presenter must give notice to the Program Chair of his/her student status at the time the Abstract is received. The Best Student Paper Award notice will accompany the call for papers. Student status must be affirmed by a note from the student's advisor or major professor, and must accompany the Abstract.

The award is based on the following factors:

1. Value of content furthering knowledge of desert tortoise biology, ecology, conservation and/or recovery;
2. Quality of content, including experimental design, organization and objectives;
3. Quality of oral presentation; and
4. Quality of visual presentation.

Papers are judged by an *ad hoc* committee normally headed by the Chair of the Awards Committee and consisting of two additional members recruited from Symposium attendees. Ideally, this committee includes both academic and non-academic biologists with a broad knowledge of desert tortoise biology and literature. If one or more undergraduate papers are competing with graduate student papers, it is up to the discretion of the committee to decide if

special weighting should be given to the undergraduate evaluations. Student posters are not judged for an award.

The recipient of the Best Student Paper Award typically is announced by the committee Chair following the lunch break on the last afternoon of the Symposium. To enable the judging committee to make its decision on the award, if at all feasible, student papers should be scheduled prior to the lunch break on the last day of the Symposium. The amount of the award is \$350.00. A list of awardees since 1997 is maintained by the committee.

#### **David J. Morafka Memorial Research Award**

**Operating Procedures for David J. Morafka Memorial Research Award:** In honor and memory of Dr. David J. Morafka, distinguished herpetologist and authority on North American gopher tortoises, the Desert Tortoise Council established a monetary award 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. morafkai*, *G. berlandieri*, and/or *G. flavomarginatus*. The award was established in 2005 and presented for the first time in 2006. The committee maintains a list of the awardees. Dr. Morafka's widow, Sylvia, has contributed \$1,000 every year to help fund the award, that amount being matched by the Council. Others are welcome to contribute, but contributions have not been actively solicited. Announcements of the award should be posted on the DTC website, the Center for North American Herpetology (CNAH), and Herpetological Review in late July or early August of each year to ensure time for adequate dissemination.

**Sample Announcement:**

ANNOUNCEMENT  
**DAVID J. MORAFKA MEMORIAL RESEARCH AWARD  
2014**

In honor and memory of Prof. 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 award 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. morafkai*, *G. berlandieri*, and/or *G. flavomarginatus*.

**Award 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. Download and open an application form from the Desert Tortoise Council's website [www.deserttortoise.org](http://www.deserttortoise.org). The form is electronically interactive.
2. Provide all information requested on the application, including a description of the research project in no more than 1,200 words.
3. Submit the completed application to [grstewart@csupomona.edu](mailto:grstewart@csupomona.edu) as a pdf attachment.
4. Applications must be supported by three letters of recommendation, one of which must be from the applicant's research advisor, supervisor, or a knowledgeable colleague. Instruct the recommenders to submit their letters to [grstewart@csupomona.edu](mailto:grstewart@csupomona.edu) as pdf attachments.
5. Completed applications and letters of recommendation must be received by **December 2, 2013**. They will be evaluated by a committee of gopher tortoise biologists appointed by the Desert Tortoise Council Board of Directors.

The research award recipient will be notified of his/her selection by **January 17, 2014** and the award will be presented at the 2014 Desert Tortoise Council Symposium, February 21-23, 2014.

**Sample Application Form:**

**DAVID J. MORAFKA MEMORIAL RESEARCH AWARD  
2014 APPLICATION FORM  
(APPLICATION DUE DECEMBER 2, 2013)**

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**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please provide all specific information requested below within the spaces allotted. Type font should be no smaller than 10 point. Submit all documents electronically to [grstewart@csupomona.edu](mailto:grstewart@csupomona.edu) as pdf attachments. Applications not adhering to these guidelines may be rejected. Award recipient will be notified by January 17, 2014.

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

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**Name:**

**Home Mailing Address:**

**Phone Number:**

**E-mail:**

**Institution or Organization:**

**Department (if applicable):**

**Name of Research Advisor, Supervisor or Colleague:**

**Phone Number:**

**E-mail:**

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**RESEARCH INFORMATION**

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**Title of research project:**

**Location(s) where research will be conducted:**

**Permits held or expected to be obtained for the research:**

**If selected to receive the award, would you agree to report on the research at a Desert Tortoise Council Symposium?**

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Request 3 letters of recommendation, as per instructions in the announcement, and e-mail the application to [grstewart@csupomona.edu](mailto:grstewart@csupomona.edu) as a pdf attachment.

**RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

In no more than 1,200 words, describe the objectives and/or hypotheses, methods and experimental design, and any preliminary data supporting the feasibility of the project. Also, describe how the award would benefit the project, and clearly indicate how the research would contribute to the biological knowledge, management and conservation of one or more gopher tortoise species in the southwestern United States and/or Mexico.

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