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# Tortoise Tracks

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The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Spring 2011 31:1

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## 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Annual Meeting and Banquet

Article and Photography by Marlene Ishii



This past January the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee hosted their 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Banquet inviting all members, interested public, colleagues, and state and federal agencies to join us for this informative and entertaining event. This provided all of the attendees the opportunity to hear about the accomplishments over the past year and the goals of the Committee for the upcoming year.

The Annual Business Meeting began with a welcoming statement from the Board of Trustees President, Mark Hagan. Mark introduced the DTPC's newly appointed Preserve Manager/Conservation Coordinator, Mary Kotschwar to the group of attendees. (See an article about Mary on Page 4 of this Newsletter.)

Laura Stockton, DTPC Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report and gave a summary of the DTPC's finances in 2010.

Contract Attorney, Jun Lee, discussed the land acquisitions and mitigations over the past year. The DTPC has acquired 10 acres within the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA) from mitigation funds received. Jun also provided an overview of potential land acquisitions within Los Angeles County.

A field report on the improvements of Camp C was given by Laura Stockton. With the help of two American Conservation Experience (ACE) work crews, restoration on over 17 acres was completed. Vertical and horizontal mulches were added to promote revegetation. A positive sign of more rodent activity was evident around

the existing mulches.

Jun Lee provided a field report on OHV Grants. The DTPC completed work on grants from the California State Parks & Recreation, OHV green sticker funds to install signs on the boundary fence of the DTRNA and large signs offset on major roads. OHV grants provided the installation of 6 miles of OHV fencing along the DTRNA which included 2 miles along the north fence and 4 miles along the south fence. Jun indicated that extreme efforts were made to not disturb any burrows or plants. "Creosote Huggers" held shrubs and bushes aside to allow the workers to install the OHV fencing and not damage any of the desert plants.

Trustee Member, Steve Ishii, gave an overview of his parcel inspections of the Chuckwalla Bench, including the Red Canyon and Amy's Wash area within the Orocochia Mountains, and Pilot Knob. Steve provided a pictorial presentation of the terrain, the vegetation, animal activity and human activity for each parcel. Pilot Knob included a list of documented and undocumented improvements that were found by a team of 8 volunteers who spent the day inspecting the parcel and reporting their results.

Carrie Woods and Shelly Ellis from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) gave an up-



Continued on page 2

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date on renewable energy projects and information on grazing permits. They also informed the group that ramps are being installed at guzzlers (established by CDFG, Quail Unlimited and BLM) to allow tortoises to escape entrapment.

The California Department of Fish & Game Activities, represented by Becky Jones, gave the attendees an overview of the increasing number of renewable energy applications. Becky informed the group of the new regulation related to endowment funds.



Following the afternoon meeting and discussion, banquet attendees enjoyed a social hour and a delicious dinner. Guests had the opportunity to participate in a raffle lead by Jane McEwan as they readied themselves for their invited speaker, Dr. Cameron Burrows, to present “Climate Change and Potential Impacts to the Desert Tortoise: Results of a Modeled Scenario for Joshua Tree National Park.”

Dr. Barrows is an Assistant Research Ecologist who coordinates desert research initiatives for the University of California Riverside's Center for Conservation Biology. The focus of his research includes the sensitivity of desert plants and animals to predicted levels of climate change, the influence of suburban-natural area interfaces, the influence of exotic species on natural community composition, and drivers of population dynamics.

Dr. Barrows’ presentation discussed the warming trend and the reduction in habitat for the

desert tortoise at Joshua Tree National Park using niche modeling. A copy of Dr. Barrows’ presentation can be found on DTPC’s website - [www.tortoise-tracks.com](http://www.tortoise-tracks.com) or on Facebook - [www.facebook.com/DTPC.Inc](http://www.facebook.com/DTPC.Inc).



Awards included a Certificate of Appreciation given to Bill Dennis at Dennis Automotive; Small Photo Plaques presented to Ray Park at Sun Coast Realty Specialists and Wayne Spencer; Large Photo Plaques given to Martha Ibarra with the California State Parks, Stephanie Pappas, and Mark Massar; and the Golden Tortoise Award given to Jun Lee with Lee Law Firm. Jun has been a DTPC member since 1990. He is an expert in land acquisition and mitigation. During the transition in filling the new Preserve Manager/Conservation Coordinator position, Jun stepped up in completing the grant obligations within the time required in order for the DTPC to retrieve over \$225,000 from the California Parks & Recreation OHV grant program.



The DTPC would like to thank those who were able to join us for this annual event and for the dedication and continued support from all of our members.



**Preserve Manager & Conservation Coordinator**  
Mary Kotschwar

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<http://www.tortoise-tracks.org>



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**The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.**

Founded 1974

**Board of Trustees**

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*In memory of . . .*

## **Lannie Dean Webb** 1936-2010

*The following is partially extracted from the written eulogy for Dean at the services in the Lancaster United Methodist church.*

Dean was born August 8, 1936 in Dinuba, California and passed away on December 26, 2010 at his home in Lancaster. He spent his youth in Dinuba. He earned a B.S. in physics and worked for McDonnell Douglas for a short time before starting a 36-year career at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards AFB.

Dean was an avid photographer, conservationist, and environmentalist. He was a founding member of the Lancaster Photography Association and was chairman of the annual photo display and competition at the Antelope Valley Fair for many years. He participated in one way or another with essentially every environmentalist organization in the Antelope Valley. These included among others the Sierra Club, Poppy Preserve, Friends of the Prime Desert Woodlands, Friends of Red Rock Canyon, Antelope Valley Environmental Group, and the Lancaster Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations. He was also a member of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. He often attended the annual business meeting and banquet.

Dean tirelessly remained informed on every environmental issue in the Valley and worked constantly to preserve the natural environment. He made many appearances before local government agencies in support of sound environmental planning and practices.

As one person commented of Dean at his funeral 'He knew nearly everybody in the Valley and somebody who knew the people he didn't know'. Dean was a kind, caring, and respected person. He was everybody's friend and always ready to help anybody with no expectation of a return favor. He will be missed by many people and organizations in the Antelope Valley, including the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.

## **Shell Shock: 25 Turtle Species in Terrible Trouble**

*Excerpt from an on-line article written by OurAmazingPlanet.  
<http://www.livescience.com/12942-turtles-tortoises-endangered-species-extinction.html>*

Turtles are among the most endangered vertebrates on Earth: roughly half of the world's 300 species are threatened with extinction. A new report profiles the 25 most vulnerable.

Turtle and tortoise populations have been decimated by illegal hunting—for both food and the pet trade—and habitat loss, and many species will go extinct in the next decade unless drastic conservation measures are taken, according to the new report, issued by a coalition of conservation groups.

Seventeen of the 25 species in the report are found in Asia, three are from South America, three are from Africa, one is from Australia, and one is native to Central America and Mexico. For some of the species, only a few individuals remain.

Illegal hunting for turtles in Asia for food, pets and traditional medicines is a particular problem, the report says.

*The entire article can be found on the Live Science website [www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com).*

*Special thanks to the following  
volunteers:*

Dr. Kristin Berry  
Mark Massar  
Chuck Hemingway  
Jun Lee  
Glen Baumbach  
Pat Sorenson  
Carrie Woods  
Shelley Ellis  
Charlie Massieon  
Laura Mogg  
Mark Bratton  
Dave Zantiny  
Laura Stockton  
Jane McEwan  
David Logan  
Steve and Marlene Ishii

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## Something about Mary

The DTPC's newly appointed Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator

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*M*ary Kotschwar joined

the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. as their new Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator on January 18, 2011. She arrived after a three day drive, which began on Whidbey Island, Washington, her home-

town. During the past few weeks, Kotschwar has been immersed in desert ecology and the world of conservation non-profits—attending the DTPC's annual meeting and banquet, several interest group meetings, and the Desert Tortoise Council Symposium. "I have a lot to learn," Kotschwar stated, "but I'm fortunate to work with such knowledgeable and dedicated people."

Kotschwar has always been interested in working with wildlife. After receiving her Bachelor's in biology from the University of Puget Sound, she embarked on a year-long independent study of how different lemur species, flagships of domestic and international conservation efforts in Madagascar, are valued in the human communities that most directly impact them. At that time, she had the long-term goal of becoming a primatologist, but soon found her interests were not limited to a particular taxon. She was most interested in behavioral ecology and the human dimensions of wildlife conservation.

After returning to the United States, Kotschwar expanded her field experience working with two sensitive species in California: the federally endangered California condor, and the Pacific fisher. During these field positions, she learned various

research techniques and also became familiar with several aspects of the federal and state regulations that affect wildlife management. It was also through these positions that Kotschwar grew confident in her career choice: she wanted to be a wildlife biologist.

When a professor at Virginia Tech posted a graduate assistantship to study lemur-predator interactions in Madagascar, Kotschwar jumped at this opportunity to pursue her Master's degree in Wildlife Sciences. Working with Dr. Sarah Karpanty, Kotschwar investigated variation in the predator communities and anti-predator behaviors of an endangered lemur species (Milne-Edwards' sifakas, *Propithecus edwardsi*) in fragmented and continuous rainforest sites. She also conducted a local ecological knowledge survey of carnivore movements outside of the continuous forest, interviewing over 180 Malagasy inhabitants in 17 remote villages. She successfully defended her work and received her M.S. in August of 2010.

Coming from the rainforests of Madagascar to the California desert constitutes quite a transition; however, Kotschwar embraces the change. "I can honestly say I have loved working with every species and every ecosystem I have encountered so far," she said, "I am looking forward to working with the DTPC, its members, and collaborating organizations towards the recovery of desert tortoise populations."

## Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. News Release

For Immediate Release: March 8, 2011  
Contact: Mary Kotschwar (951-683-3872) or [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net)

### THE DTPC INVITES PUBLIC COMMENTS ON OHV GRANT APPLICATION

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) invites public comments on its draft application to the California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division.

The DTPC is requesting approximately \$29,122 from the OHMVR Division for an education project. If funded, the DTPC will increase educational outreach to OHV recreationists through the development and implementation of an integrated environmental education and responsible recreation program. The program would promote an outdoor ethic and teach responsible recreation guidelines especially relevant for OHV recreation in the Mojave Desert through organizing events and providing educational materials at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, Kern County, California, and throughout the surrounding region. Funds would be used in 2011 and 2012.

Anyone interested can review the grant application, along with those from other agencies, local governments, and non-profits, on-line at [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov). The commenting period is open from Tuesday, March 8, 2011 until Monday, April 4, 2011. Comments should be sent directly to the OHMVR Division at [ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov) and to the DTPC at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net). Late comments will be forwarded to the division separately. Final grant applications are due May 2, 2011.

For additional information on the application contact Mary Kotschwar, Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator at (951) 683-3872, or by e-mail at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net).

## Calendar of Events

**March 8th to April 4:** Public Comments on OHMVR Grant Application (see article above for details).

**March 19th:** DTPC's Annual Spring Work Party. This is a great opportunity for individuals to learn more about the Mojave Desert, threats to wild desert tortoise populations, and some of the techniques currently used by the

DTPC to help recover the species and preserve habitat.

**April 2nd:** Wildflower Walk led by Dr. Kristin Berry at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. The flower walk will emphasize plants the desert tortoises eat and shrubs used to provide cover for burrows. Donations accepted.

More information about each event can be found by calling (951) 683-3872 or sending an email to [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net). Additional information can be found on the DTPC's website [www.tortoise-tracks.org](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org) and Facebook [www.facebook.com/dtpc.inc](http://www.facebook.com/dtpc.inc).

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## West Mojave Plan Remedy Request Approved

Tom Egan, Products Manager, Desert Tortoise Council

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The Desert Tortoise Council (DTC) has been closely involved with the West Mojave ("WEMO") Route Designation first approved by the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") in 2003 and adopted as a California Desert Conservation Area ("CDCA") Plan amendment in 2006. DTC representatives worked extensively in providing recommendations leading up to the adoption of this vehicle use management plan—the largest of its kind in the nation. Unfortunately, many of these recommendations were not incorporated into BLM's final decision on the WEMO Plan. Numerous protests were submitted following BLM's adoption of this plan, which were summarily dismissed. A coalition of ten environmental organizations subsequently initiated litigation regarding BLM's route designation for the region, arguing that it did not comply with the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"), the Federal Land Policy Management Act ("FLPMA") and the CDCA Plan.

In 2009, U.S. District Judge Susan Ilston ruled on the merits of this case. BLM's designation was found significantly "flawed because it did not contain a reasonable range of alternatives" to limit damage to native plant communities and sensitive habitat. BLM was also found to have inadequately analyzed the routes' impacts on air quality, soils, plant communities, riparian habitats, and sensitive species, pointing out that the desert and its resources are "extremely fragile, easily scarred, and slowly healed." BLM was found to have violated the NEPA and FLPMA as well as not followed its own CDCA Plan relative to vehicle route designation.

Following this success, the environmental coalition requested the court consider a

series of injunctive remedies designed to specifically address the WEMO route designation inadequacies. The DTC and other environmental organizations in 2010 sponsored a photographic documentation effort of the WEMO route designation and current vehicle use on the ground, in support of the requested relief. This field work resulted in thirty two site records being submitted to the court, along with recommendations on how to improve vehicle use management until such time as the WEMO route designation was revised to comply with the court's earlier ruling. A general lack of vehicle use management on the ground was a significant finding of this effort.

The long-awaited remedy request, supported by DTC-sponsored field work, was ruled on by Judge Ilston in January, 2011. The court has retained jurisdiction over this matter and BLM must now complete a revised WEMO route designation complying with all laws and regulations by March, 2014. Signs must now be placed on all off-road vehicle routes which are legal to use. A monitoring plan to determine if illegal vehicle use is occurring must also be initiated. Additional enforcement to prevent illegal use has also been ordered. The completion of detailed implementation plan for signing of routes for travel must be submitted to the court by March 29, 2011. Plans for informational kiosk installation, vehicle use compliance monitoring, and additional enforcement must also be submitted to the court by April 28, 2011. It's been a long and winding road, but our hopes are that vehicle use management in desert tortoise habitat within the western Mojave Desert will now improve.

## Spring Wild Flower Walk

Saturday, April 2, 2011  
9:00 am to 2:00 pm

### Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, Kern County, CA

**Kristin H. Berry, Ph.D.** will lead a field trip identifying beautiful spring wild flowers at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. She has been collecting information on flora of the Natural Area for several years. There are over 200 species of flowering plants on the Natural Area. Germination of annual wildflowers occurs when moisture is abundant and with the rains this past winter the perennial and annual flowers should be abundant and full of color. The flower walk will emphasize plants the desert tortoises eat and shrubs used to provide cover for burrows.



#### ITEMS TO BRING:

Hat, sun screen, day pack, water, lunch, guide books, a hand lens, binoculars. Good walking shoes a must.

#### DONATIONS ACCEPTED

For more information contact Mary Kotschwar  
Phone: (951) 683-3872 - Email: dtpc@pacbell.net  
www.tortoise-tracks.org

## DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE, INC.

### MEMBERSHIP/DONOR FORM

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
RENEWAL   
NEW

Individual membership \$ 15 annually [ ]  
Family membership \$ 20 annually [ ]  
Sponsor membership \$ 30 annually [ ]  
Benefactor membership \$ 75 annually [ ]  
Patron membership \$100 annually [ ]  
Life \$500

Membership Dues \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### DONATION ONLY

Enclosed in my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to DTPC and mail to:  
DTPC  
4067 Mission Inn Avenue  
Riverside, CA 92501

The DTPC is an IRS recognized tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation (tax ID 23-7413415). All contributions above the basic \$15 annual membership dues are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

All contributors receive the quarterly newsletter *Tortoise Tracks*.

Membership and donor information are kept confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties.

### I WANT TO VOLUNTEER

My area of interest/expertise is:

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# Tortoise Tracks

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Work parties provide a great opportunity for individuals to learn more about the Mojave Desert, threats to wild desert tortoise populations, and some of the techniques currently used by the DTPC to help recover the species and preserve habitat.

Activities will include  
Seed Collection  
Desert Clean-up  
Sign Installation  
Fence Maintenance  
Road Improvements

If you are interested in participating, please call (951) 683-3872 or email the DTPC at [<dtpc@pacbell.net>](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net)

## Spring Work Party, March 19, 2011

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee  
Invites You To Attend Our