



NEWSLETTER

Improving the lives of wild and desert tortoises through education. A non-profit organization since 1982

Volume: XXII
No : 4
September 2009
Las Vegas, NV

Improving the lives of wild and pet desert tortoises through education.
A non-profit organization since 1982

Hotline: 702-739-7113
www.TortoiseGroup.org

Hatchling Time is Here!

Soon those adorable little hatchlings will make their appearance. Families already loaded with little ones will look for someone to take those babies, and most will end up dead. Please remember that one must prepare for a tortoise before receiving one. Popping one into an aquarium "just for now" is not a humane situation. And please, do not let the children take the babies to school to give away like cookies. Call the Tortoise Pickup Service at 593-9027. They will take the hatchlings to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center where they will be taken care of or adopted.



Support that wanderlust of hatchlings. Give them the freedom of the yard and see how quickly they find the back door and come back for daily MegaDiet, each day losing a little more fear as you feed them. They know what to do with cactus pads and willow flowers, too. Contact us: 702-739-8043, tortoisegroup@att.net

- H**ealthy tortoises live outside from the time they hatch
- U**se special roof tiles as burrow starters. Buy from Tortoise Group.
- M**egaDiet is important food to feed tortoises.
- A**ugust may yield hatchlings; don't wait to build the enclosure.
- N**o aquariums needed, destroy them. They are killing chambers.
- E**nclosure directions are in TG Adoption and Care Booklet, May 2007
- C**ollect dandelions to plant in the enclosure. See TG Information Sheet #13
- A**lways ready for questions, 702 739-8043, tortoisegroup@att.net
- R**emember, tortoise abuse is easy. Learn more to help your tortoise and others.
- E**liminate all yard poisons; they're not needed



Please join Tortoise Group's online community at Facebook. This is a place where we can share ideas, event information, photos and so much more. If you already have a Facebook account, just type Tortoise Group into the search box and press enter. You may also find our Facebook Page by following this link <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tortoise-Group/100473688476>



Tortoise Care Calendar Coming!

The July meeting for kids produced terrific tortoise pictures, 17 of which will grace our new calendar. Available about September 1, the calendar features 10-15 care, behavior and TG facts each month, September 2009 – December 2010. At only \$10, you'll never find a handier, more informative tortoise reference for seasonal care. Sponsored by Reliant Energy. Order online www.tortoisegroup.org/new/sales/intoshop.php or pick one up at the September meeting.

October Plant Sale

The Desert Garden Center has given Tortoise Group the opportunity to buy plants before the official start of the October Plant Sale. These Mojave natives and other desert-adapted plants are the perfect way to spruce up your habitat. Plants tortoises like will be specially flagged. Don't miss this great opportunity; your tortoise will thank you. September 26, 8 am – 3 pm, Desert Garden Center, 6221 W. Charleston (between Jones and Torrey Pines).

How Can I See inside That Burrow? by Kathy Utiger

Worry, worry, worry! Has my tortoise escaped? Is it trapped in the burrow? I haven't seen my tortoise all week. Is it okay? How we tortoise owners worry about our little loved ones, and all because we can't see what they are doing. And as we know from experience, most of the time our tortoise is in its burrow and just doesn't feel like coming out. Maybe it's too hot, like it has been recently, and the tortoise is staying in where it's cool, or perhaps it came out at night to sleep and went back in without your having seen it. Only the tortoise knows. If only we could see in there!

This year I have taken The Snooper to several homes to look down tortoise burrows. In all but two cases, I didn't need The Snooper at all. I used two methods. First, I whipped my handy little mirror out of my pocket and shined the reflected sunlight down the burrow. In three cases I could see the tortoise right



Kids help Shari Yost with storytelling.



Parents and kids create great tortoise pictures!

away. If I couldn't see the tortoise, I gently slid a piece of PVC pipe down the burrow a bit at a time. Then I'd stop and listen for movement. In one case, that stirred up the tortoise enough that it moved around and we could see it. The combination of movement in the burrow and light from the mirror often stirs the tortoise's curiosity to come and check on what's happening—much to the relief of the worried owners. That's just what happened in the other cases-- they strolled out. So far, all tortoises are accounted for.

What can you do? Learn to use that fabulous tool, the mirror. The September meeting will feature a workshop on how to use a mirror to see into the burrow. All participants will receive a free mirror and Information Sheet #28, Using a Small Mirror to See into a Burrow.

DTCC Accepting Interns and Volunteers

The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) is now being managed cooperatively by the San Diego Zoo, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. They are welcoming volunteers and interns with a variety of skills to do a multitude of tasks including feeding tortoises, assisting with health assessments, cleaning the facility, assisting with data collection, performing data entry, filing, cleaning and disinfecting totes, repairing enclosures, searching for tortoises in large pens, assisting with translocation, etc. All volunteers and interns are expected to perform all available tasks within their physical abilities.

Volunteers can have flexible schedules, while interns commit to at least one day of work each week for at least 3 months, and they are paid \$20 for each 8 hour day they spend on site. If you are interested in a volunteer or intern position at the DTCC, please contact Angie Sawyer, the DTCC's Research Coordinator at asawyer@sandiegozoo.org. She will send you an application that you will need to complete and return with all of the requested documentation before you will be interviewed. If you'd like to see what we're up to at the DTCC these days, please log onto our blog at www.sandiegozoo.org/wordpress and scroll down to the latest DTCC blog.

Tortoise Behavior in Late Summer and Fall By Betty Burge

Behaviors change throughout the year. The artificially rich environment that you provide may be responsible for very different responses from your tortoises than one would find in the wild tortoises.

Renewed Activity

Suddenly, despite the continued high daytime temperatures tortoises are becoming active to the point of pacing the edges of the property, checking places in the yard where they have not been for weeks or months, appetites are up, and there may be some social interaction. All ages and both sexes are very apt to do all or some of the above at this time of year.

Chin Glands

You may notice that the chin glands of males are enlarged as testosterone levels in the blood increase, typical of the season. Females may stay in their burrows to avoid the advances of males, or not. From what I have observed in the wild, tortoises may travel beyond their usual haunts and spend time in other burrows (wild tortoises will have several). Tortoises may decide to use one of these burrow during brumation (winter sleep).

Males Fighting

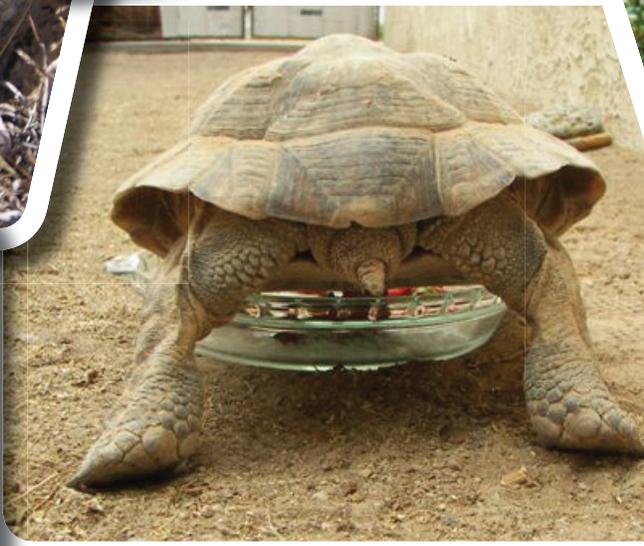
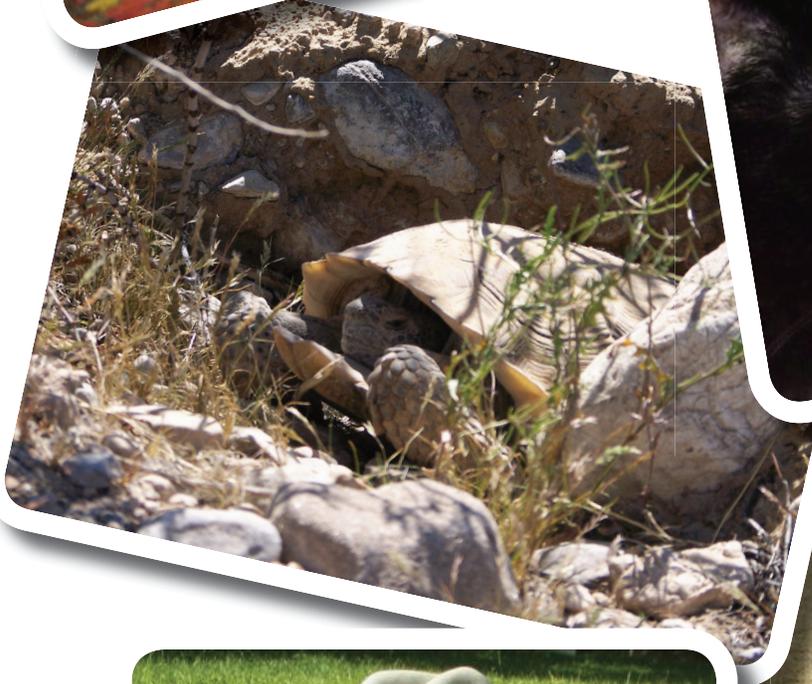
Males may encounter other males and they may joust with their gular horns or shove or bite at the snout, and forelegs. One may flip over the other male. All these actions are just what you have seen when a male is courting a female, usually with the exception of not trying to tip her over. This fighting between males may end in one tortoise attempting to leave and being chased by the other or flipping him over. If you are still keeping two fighting males, please think seriously of giving up one of them. Their fighting is promoting continual stress which is not fair, even inhumane.

Rain

If it rains during the tortoises' active season, wild tortoises aren't likely to miss a chance to drink, but your pet tortoise may not come out when it rains because it is sufficiently hydrated from water having been available all the time in the water dish.

Change in Diet

Come fall we are often confounded by the plants our tortoise will or will not eat. My dead grass is a favorite and, of course, roses. The tufted evening primroses ignored all season have suddenly disappeared. Tortoises, unlike us, respond to bodily needs. Your tortoise knows what he needs.





Fall Meeting Schedule

Nevada State Museum
700 Twin Lakes Drive
LV 89107 (in Lorenzi Park)

**September 19,
Saturday, 1 – 3 pm**

**Workshop on Using a Mirror to
Look Inside a Tortoise Burrow;
Demonstration on Weighing,
Measuring, and Handling Your
Tortoise; Tortoise Trivia Game; Annual Meeting;
AND Ice Cream Sundaes for all!!**

Learn to use a mirror to see inside your tortoise burrow. Free mirror for each participant. Don't miss this one! It's going to be a whole lot of fun!

**October 17, Saturday, 10 am - noon
Field Trip to the Springs Preserve**

333 S Valley View

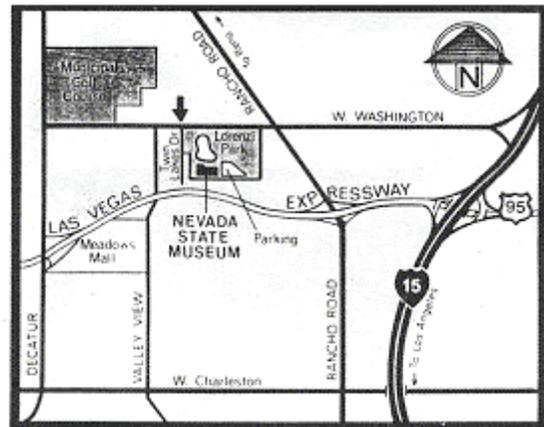
LV 89117 (east of the Meadows Mall)

Park your car and meet at the entrance to the Springs Preserve. No fee to Tortoise Group members.

Dr. Raymond Saumure will lead a tour of the 20-acre site of the proposed desert tortoise habitat. Dr. Saumure is a wildlife biologist who oversees all native wildlife related issues at the Springs Preserve, as well as consulting with staff zoologists on the live animal exhibits in the Origen Experience. He will give us a special look at things-to-come for desert tortoises.

Correction on Black Widow Spider Tortoise Tip

I sent out a Tortoise Tip telling folks that black widow spiders are timid, easily frightened creatures that live peacefully inside burrows with tortoises. They hoard their venom and use it only in life-threatening situations. I also stated that the spiders would not harm tortoises. Ray Ashton of Ashton Biodiversity Research & Preservation Institute Inc. in Florida sent the following



Call Kathy at 804-0472 for directions

correction: "There is no indication that the spider would not attempt to bite a tortoise if in fact the tortoise got the spider caught say between the neck and front leg. We cannot find any data on the venom's impact on a tortoise or any other reptiles." Thank you, Ray.
Kathy Utiger

MegaDiet Satellite Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment

Nellis & Owens	Georgi – 459-1274
Decatur & Gowan	Toni – 277-6179
Cheyenne & Durango	Susann - 205-7576
215 & Far Hills	Kathy & Pauline – 804-0472, 9am – 7pm
215 & W. Tropicana	Athena- 891-8585
Rainbow & Alta	Kellie –353-5513
Dean Martin & Blue Diamond	Carolyn – 876-0668, ext. 874
Tropicana & Maryland	Betty – 739-8043
Eastern & Windmill	Patsy – 269-7108
Silverado Ranch & S. Maryland Pkwy	Helene – 878-7877
Boulder Hwy & Equestrian (Henderson)	Gail – 334-0015 Cell
Warm Springs & Lake Mead (Henderson)	Gay – 563-1924
Boulder City	Carol - 293-6494
Pahrump	Sheri –775-727-5557
Kingman, AZ	Toni – 928-757-8317

Henderson's Best Kept Secret

Henderson Bird Viewing Sanctuary, located within the Water Treatment Facility, sits on approximately 140 acres near the intersection of Sunset and Boulder Highway. Address is 2400 B Moser Drive, phone 267-4180. Open every day 6 am -3 pm, no charge. If you need binoculars they will hold your car keys "in trade." At least 260 species of birds have been viewed there.
http://www.cityofhenderson.com/parks/parks/bird_preserve.php

MegaDiet Sellers Needed

- Camino al Norte & Ann Rd.
 - Charleston and Rancho
- Call Betty at 739-8043 for more info.

OnLine Store at: <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/sales/intoshop.php>

No computer? Don't use a credit card? Call Susan – 702-458-8382

A 1½ lb bag costing \$8.00 (\$12.00 for non-members) lasts a large desert tortoise about one month.

MegaDiet is also sold at TG meetings.

Tortoise Group Membership Form

Memberships and contributions may be tax deductible

1. Please Print the COMPLETE address

First Name	Last Name	Phone
Address		
City	State	Zip Code
E-mail		

2. Check One Newsletter Option

- Send my newsletter by e-mail
- Send my newsletter in hard copy

2009

3. Check amount for your 1-year membership

() \$15 () \$25 () \$35 () \$50 () \$75 () Life \$500

Special Project Funding
 Contribution: _____ **TOTAL** _____

33% discount on MegaDiet and 10% on other Tortoise Group goodies to members and their immediate families

**Make check payable to Tortoise Group. Mail with form to:
 Tortoise Group ♦ 1001 Adobe Flat ♦ Henderson, NV 89011**

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The Tortoise Group newsletter is published four
times yearly: March, May, July, and September

Moving?

If either you or your tortoise is moving, we'd like to know. Send email and physical address changes to kutiger@embarqmail.com.



Thank you to Amy Levitus of Avant Garde Design for her continued support in the layout of our newsletter. www.agdesignlv.com

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