

# Tortoise Group Newsletter

The Organization for the Protection of Nevada's Resident Tortoises, Inc.  
A non-profit organization since 1982

Hotline: 702-739-7113

Volume XXI No. 4 September 2008

[www.TortoiseGroup.org](http://www.TortoiseGroup.org)

Las Vegas, Nevada

## Desert Plant Facility to Close

The Desert Garden Center, 6221 West Charleston next to the College of Southern Nevada (CSN), will be closing to the public at the end of September. This wonderful nursery has provided luscious native plants for years.

As a treat to Tortoise Group, Beth Tomica Hewitt, will lead a tour of the Plant Propagation Facility on Saturday, October 18, at 9:30 at the Henderson Campus of CSN. This time of year is perfect for planting, so do plan to come and stock up on tortoise plants. CHECKS ONLY will be accepted.

The 10-acre site contains five greenhouses and lots to see, so be ready for some walking. And as a special gift, Beth plans to have a tufted evening primrose for each of us to pot—and even the pots!

RSVP to [kutiger@embarqmail.com](mailto:kutiger@embarqmail.com) or call 804-0472 so Beth will have plenty of plants for us. Please refer to page 4 for driving directions.

The CSN staff is aware that many members and friends of Tortoise Group depend on the facility for their native plant needs. The Tortoise Group Board of Directors and the staff of the Plant Propagation Facility on the Henderson Campus hope to work out a plan to take orders once or twice a year to supply you with tortoise-friendly food and habitat plants.

## Looking for the Perfect Part-Time Job? Tortoise Group to Hire Help

That's right! We have so many projects we would like to do but so little time. We need help and are moving to a new level in hiring a person to manage some of our many responsibilities.

Interested? We are starting with 10 hours per week at \$15/hour and plan to move to 20 as we add tasks. This person will work from their home office and must have very good computer, writing, and organizational skills.

Administrative Coordinator – This flexible, part-time position is responsible for various administrative projects related to the work of Tortoise Group, including, but not limited to, marketing, education, database management, membership, accounting, correspondence, publications, website and public inquiries. Send resume and cover letter to Laura Deitsch, email at [LNDeitsch@yahoo.com](mailto:LNDeitsch@yahoo.com), or mail to 10416 Blenheim Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89135.



Good-looking tortoise emerges from its burrow at the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center in Las Vegas.

## Storing MegaDiet over Winter

Refrigerate but do not freeze. Freezing degrades or destroys some nutrients.

## Lost Tortoises

Want your lost tortoise back? One of the most frequent calls we receive is the sad news that a tortoise is missing from a yard. Increase the chance that it will be returned to you by affixing your telephone number to the shell. We provide you with a way to do this, harmlessly. Applied properly it should remain legible for years.

Are you hesitant about getting started? Check Information Sheet #5, *Marking Your Tortoise*, at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/infosheet05.html>. There is a photograph of a tortoise with an ID tag on the last page of our booklet, *Desert Tortoises, Adoption and Care*, available at all veterinary hospitals and branches of the public library.

Soon, our *Lost Tortoise Prevention Kit* will be available through our OnLine Store. The supplies you will need for marking are in the kit. At \$10, it's quite a deal.

For further identification, you may want a microchip injected under the skin. In the Las Vegas area there are more than a dozen veterinarians who care for tortoises and can provide that service. Vets who do this are nation wide. Check our list of vets who treat tortoises, Information Sheet #24; those with an asterisk implant microchips <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/infosheet24.html>.



**2007 Photo Contest Winner, Tortoises with Other Animals. Peek sits on Sushi, by Mikayla Whitmore**

## MegaDiet Satellite Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment

Nellis & Owens	Georgi – 459-1274
Decatur & Gowan	Toni – 277-6179
215 & Lone Mtn	Lynn – 655-5698
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	
Gail – 334-0015 Cell	
Warm Springs & Lake Mead (Henderson)	
Gay – 563-1924	
Pahrump	Sheri – 775-727-5557
Kingman, AZ	Toni – 928-757-8317

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.

## MegaDiet Sellers Needed

- Green Valley           Anthem
  - Centennial Hills       Aliante
- Call Betty at 739-8043 to learn more

## Dr. K's Kolumn

By Christine Kolmstetter, DVM  
Cheyenne West Animal Hospital

Animals, including reptiles, can sometimes carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans. Such diseases are referred to as “zoonotic.” Humans that are at higher risks of becoming ill from such diseases are immunosuppressed individuals, infants and young children, the elderly, and anyone that has a chronic disease and/or is taking medications that have compromised the immune system.

In reptiles, including desert tortoises, the most significant zoonotic disease is Salmonellosis. This disease is caused by Salmonella bacteria. There are over 2,000 different types of Salmonella bacteria, and very few of them are associated with reptilian zoonoses. Salmonella bacteria are typically a normal component of the reptilian intestinal tract and rarely cause disease in reptiles. Reptiles may intermittently shed these bacteria in their feces, but veterinarians generally do not recommend routine testing of reptiles for Salmonella because the results of such testing are usually questionable. Also, attempts to treat a reptile with antibiotics in an effort to rid them of their normal Salmonella bacteria are almost always unsuccessful and can result in resistant strains of the bacteria that are potentially more harmful to humans.

How are humans and pets exposed to Salmonella from reptiles? This typically occurs from accidental ingestion of reptile fecal material and can result in fever and potentially severe diarrhea in humans. Pets, particularly dogs, sometimes seem attracted to reptile feces and may ingest them, or unfortunately, may ingest the entire reptile. This can result in very severe gastro-intestinal disease for your canine friend.

How can you protect yourself, your family, and other pets from potential exposure to Salmonella from your reptile? Follow common sense and a few simple rules:

- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling your reptile or any dishes or cage accessories associated with your reptile.
- Wear gloves when cleaning your reptile's water dishes or outside water areas or ponds.
- Supervise children closely when handling reptiles, and minimize direct contact of children with reptiles.
- Do not allow reptiles near human food preparation or dining areas.
- Dogs and other pets should not be allowed in desert tortoise yard areas, both for the protection of the tortoise and to minimize potential ingestion of tortoise feces by the dog.
- Reptiles should never be soaked in the kitchen sink. It is preferable not to soak your tortoise in any sink or bathtub that is used by humans; however, if you elect to do so, the area should be thoroughly disinfected with dilute bleach followed by a thorough water rinse.
- Do not kiss your reptile.
- Do not dump soiled reptile drinking water into human sink areas or on grass or other outdoor surfaces that humans or pets may come into contact with.
- Consult your physician if you have received any scratches or bite wounds from your reptile. Such wounds can become infected.
- Have your reptile examined at least yearly by a qualified reptile veterinarian to address any health issues regarding your pet.



Even this adorable hatchling could carry Salmonella. “Wow Dad! What big arms you have!” with Tucker (left) and Izzy, by Angela Jones.

## Fall Events

Nevada State Museum  
& Historical Society

700 Twin Lakes Drive (in Lorenzi Park)

1 - 3 pm

Call Kathy at 804-0472 for directions

September 20, Saturday, 1 to 3 pm

Ice Cream Social Photo Contest

Annual Meeting Silent Auction

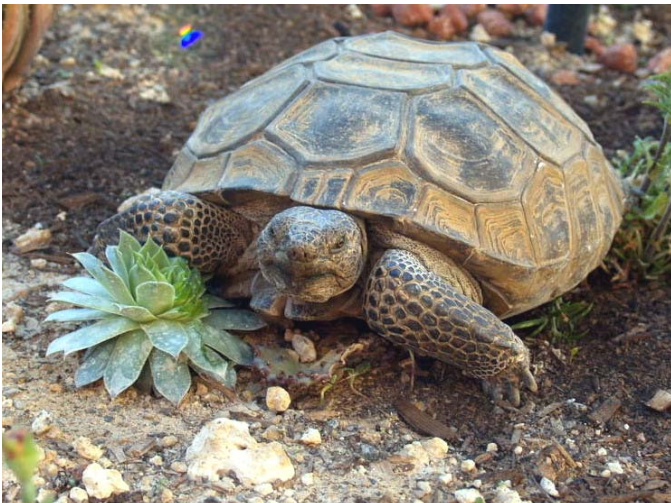
AND

"Taking Great Tortoise Pictures"

by Rich Ruocco

Rich has some fabulous photo tips up his sleeve, and he'll give examples of good and bad animal photography.

In an effort to make the photo contest more user-friendly and attractive, this year the "guidelines" will become rules that will be honored more stringently than in years past. Only photos that meet the specifications on the opposite page will be considered. Please read them over carefully and then take and submit some wonderful photos, both electronic and printed. The contest is always more fun with lots of pictures. And let's face it; we all love to show off our babies!!



Hannah, seen posing here, died of old age just after the debut of her habitat at our July meeting.

October 18, Saturday, 9:30 to 11:30  
Field Trip to the Plant Propagation Site  
at College of So NV, Henderson Campus  
by Beth Tomica Hewitt

Last chance to buy plants loved by tortoises before the CSN facilities closes to public sales. Beth will give a tour of the facility and then allow us to browse and purchase plants. **Checks Only.** Allow 2 hours to see this fabulous site.

The 10-acre facility has 5 greenhouses, so wear your walking shoes and be ready for a plant feast. This facility provides plants for native revegetation. Beth plans to have a tufted evening primrose for each of us to pot. They'll even supply the pots!

RSVP to Kathy at [kutiger@embarqmail.com](mailto:kutiger@embarqmail.com) or call 804-0472 so Beth will have enough plants for all.



2007 Photo Contest Winner, Non-Native Tortoises.  
Patti Turtle and Babies (3-toed box turtles),  
by Alan Zack.

**Directions:** College of Southern Nevada, Henderson Campus, 700 College Drive, Henderson (in the far southeastern part of the valley) Take US 95 south to Exit 57, 2 miles south of Horizon Ridge. Turn left and go about 0.4 miles to the stop light at Heather Drive. Turn left – the college will be on your right. Turn right into the first drive and follow the signs to the Greenhouse at the far end of the parking lot. Park in the lot by Building A and the greenhouse, and look for the Tortoise Group signs. We'll see you there! (From Summerlin, the drive took about 40 minutes.)



## Tortoises on Parade Photo Contest and Slide Show

Our desert tortoises have been awake all summer showing off their mischievous and loving personalities with us humans who share their world. Now share the best pics of your darling pets in two ways: this year submit as many photos as you would like ELECTRONICALLY for entry into the slide show that will be running during the social part of the meeting, and MAIL or bring in your printed pictures to be judged in the Photo Contest!



Judges will present:  
**Best-In-Shell Prizes**  
**\$50 overall winner**  
**\$25 each category**

**Photos will be judged in four categories.**  
**Include a caption for added fun!**

1. Desert Tortoise(s) alone
2. Desert Tortoise with other animal(s)
3. Desert Tortoise(s) with people
4. All other tortoise photos



### Rules for contest:

- Maximum two (2) entries per person/per category
- **All entries must be submitted at the meeting by 1:15 pm on September 20 or received by Tortoise Group in the mail by September 19 – NO EXCEPTIONS! BE PROMPT!**
- Send electronic pictures to: [kutiger@embarqmail.com](mailto:kutiger@embarqmail.com)
- Photographs only – no live tortoises at the meeting, PLEASE!
- All photos become property of Tortoise Group
- Winners need NOT be present
- Photos in glass frames will NOT be accepted
- Photos depicting dangerous situations will NOT be accepted

**Mail photos to:**  
Tortoise Group  
5157 Poncho Circle  
Las Vegas, NV 89119

### Requirements for photos:

- Maximum size is 8" x 10", black & white or color, glossy or matte
- Mounted on cardboard or other lightweight backing
- Optional caption may be written on bottom margin
- MANDATORY INFORMATION PROVIDED on the back: Category; Tortoise's name; submitted by name, address and phone number; name of owner (if different from photographer's)

**Winning photos will be placed on the website!**

## Late Summer Habits by Betty Burge

Late summer habits. By late summer, burrow temperatures finally heat up and tend to hold on to that heat if you have built the well-insulated design we suggest. Temperatures above ground become cooler at night, cooler than the burrow interiors. Your tortoise may take advantage of that cooler temperature and sleep exposed, just snuggled under a shrub or on the patio.

Males may become unusually restless, pacing along the fencing. If there are female tortoises about, the seasonal pursuit starts or increases. Hopefully you are not seeing much of this because you have joined the responsible tortoise owners and have separated the sexes, permanently. Males seem to live with that periodic depravation and females do much better as a result. In contrast, unwanted hatchlings may or may not fare well.

The attention forced upon females in the confines of your yard results in females not coming out to feed as often as their hunger dictates, whereas in the wild the encounters are not that frequent and escape is possible. This is not so in the average yard. The result may be 20 hatchlings a year and hasty distribution by the owners.

Giving away the appealing hatchlings without proper yard preparation or sufficient information about care on the part of the new owner is rampant. Months later Tortoise Group speaks with those hasty receivers about what to do for extreme soft shell and loss of appetite and a host of other signs of inadequate care. Don't expect the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center Holding Facility to take your unwanted youngsters **if** you still have males and females together.

*Answers to FAQs can be found on our website, [www.tortoisegroup.org](http://www.tortoisegroup.org), our Hotline, 702-739-7113, and in our free booklet, **Desert Tortoises Adoption and Care**, available at all animal hospitals and branches of the public library in Clark County.*

## MegaDiet Bagging Day a Huge Success! Thank You Everyone!

What great volunteers we have at Tortoise Group! We have MegaDiet Sellers, Pamphlet Distributors, Booth Staff, Committee and Board Members, Refreshment Contributors, and on and on. I want to thank each of you for your time and your enthusiasm. Without you we could never provide the many services we do.



We had such a wonderful turnout for our MegaDiet Bagging Day on August 9 that I'd like to let you know who helped. Kathy Rice; Nancy Little; Abigail Frisch; Toni Downen; Bev Stewart; Ginger and Don Reid; Norm and Jean Maul; Gae Joyce; Francesca, Sarah, and Paul Haake; Cathy and Austin Adamsen; Chris Breen and Lana Warner; Jon Bastian; Jim Moore; Jerry Shupe, Debbie Forbush; Glenace and Mark Melton; Richard Brattain; Aundie Smyth; Jessica and Mark Carroll; Janet Anderson; Jana Thompson; Terry Shanks; Linda Parker; JoAnn Cohen; Mark and Brandon Moore; Richard Knapp; Merrill Larch; Wende Lestelle; Susan Stater; Trilla Newton; Kathy Utiger; and me. My apologies if I missed anyone.

WOW! In an hour and a half we polished off three big tasks. What a group. And it was so much fun! Let me add a thank you to ALL volunteers. It has been a very generous year from you.

Betty

**Email Updates** If you have changed your email within the last 6 months and haven't notified us, please send an email with your name to [tortoisegroup@att.net](mailto:tortoisegroup@att.net). We have lost close to 50 of you.

### **Why Are There So Many Tortoises at the Tortoise Holding Facility?**

Why are there are as many as 1000 tortoises at the Tortoise Holding Facility? Answer: Escaped pets found in the street is one of the reasons.

How do tortoises escape? A tortoise escapes because the gate opening barrier was not present or not secure, or was removed by the gardener and not replaced; the tortoise dug out under wood or wire fencing; you took the tortoise out to graze on the front lawn and the inside telephone rang.

Think about checking the gate opening barrier we show in our booklet, *Desert Tortoises, Adoption and Care*. This wonderful 28-page booklet can be found on our website, [www.tortoisegroup.org](http://www.tortoisegroup.org) and locally in all vet offices and libraries.

Also, see our Information Sheet #22, *Gate Barrier Construction* under the Information Sheet link on our Home Page <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/infosheet22.html> .

Put your tortoise in the house on days the gardener comes and you are going to be away. Provide a little grass in the yard where the tortoise lives. In that grass is the best place to plant the dandelions. Think about a way to make it easy for the children to replace the gate opening barrier after the bikes are taken through the gate

----- Cut Here -----

### **Tortoise Group Membership Form**

A portion of memberships and contributions *should* be tax deductible  
Memberships are individual. They expire each December 31

**1. Please Print the COMPLETE address**

Name (one name only please)	Phone	
_____		
Address		
_____		
City	State	Zip Code
_____	_____	_____
E-mail		
_____		

**2. Check One Newsletter Option      2008**

- Send meeting notices and other news by e-mail and send my newsletter in hard copy
- Send my newsletter by e-mail
- Send my newsletter in hard copy

**3.  Renewing Member       New Member**

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

Special Contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

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 ♦ 1201 S. Casino Center ♦ Las Vegas, NV 89104**

**Tortoise Group**  
5157 Poncho Circle  
Las Vegas, NV 89119  
702-739-8043

[www.tortoisegroup.org](http://www.tortoisegroup.org)

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Laura Deitsch, Wende Lestelle,  
Susan Stater

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

**Calendar**

**September 20, Saturday, 1 – 3 pm at the NV State Museum**  
*Ice Cream Social, Photo Contest, Silent Auction, Annual Meeting AND “Taking Great Tortoise Pictures”*  
*by Rich Ruocco*

**October 18, Saturday, 9:30 – 11:30 at College of Southern Nevada, Henderson Campus**  
*Field Trip to the Native Plant Propagation Site – Special opportunity to purchase plants that tortoises love!*

**[Details & contact information on pages 1, 4, and 5](#)**

**March 2009 – First meeting of the 2009 season**

Material submitted to the Tortoise Group becomes the property of Tortoise Group and may be edited before printing.

Printed on recycled paper

