

Tortoise Group Newsletter

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

Hotline: 702-739-7113

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www.TortoiseGroup.org

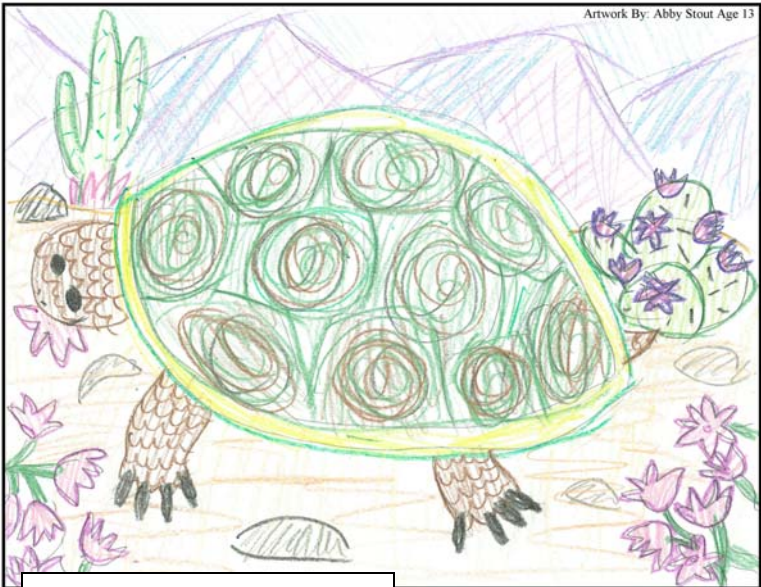

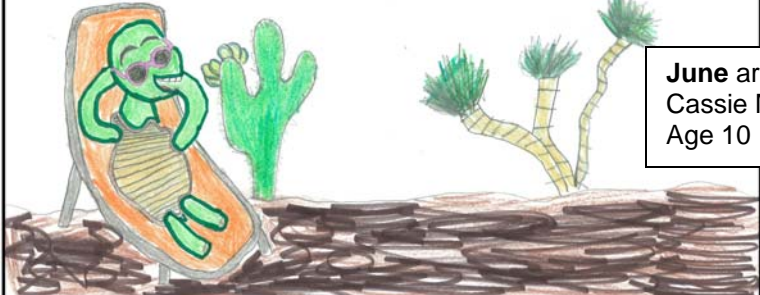
Las Vegas, Nevada

Hurry, Hurry, Get Your Tortoise Care Calendars!

Bring that extra \$10 to the meeting on March 20. Your copy of the Tortoise Care Calendar is waiting! Or, order two right now at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/sales/intoshop.php>, one for you and one for your neighbor. Chock full of tips for habitat maintenance and tortoise care, this nifty little calendar is a must for every tortoise household. Check the examples below with pictures created by our own kids at the July 2009 meeting.

August 2010

Monthly Tip: Do not pick up a wild tortoise unless it is on a busy road through the desert. Hold it level by the sides, walk slowly, place tortoise 100 feet off the road in the direction that it was going.

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|-------------------------|-----|--|--------------------------|---|
| 1 Collect scats daily, at least before grass when eat. | 2 | 3 Game: Flip through | 4 | 5 Chalky white | 6 | 7 Watch for first hatchlings. Put in pen, drinking water always available. |
| 8 |  <p>Artwork By: Abby Stout Age 13</p> | | | 13 Moving? Send new information to TG, especially if you adopted from TG. | 14 | |
| 15 Hatchlings! Check the readiness. | | | | 20 agency federal of the Mojave | 21 TG Meeting 1-3 pm. | |
| 22 | | | |  | | |
| 29 Buy two add perennial food plants, IS# 21. | <p>April artwork by Abby Stout Age 12</p>  <p>June artwork by Cassie Mendoza Age 10</p> | | | <p>ch for tipping</p> | | |

MegaDiet Corner

The Tortoise Group website offers an amazing wealth of information on MegaDiet. Check out some of these topics and many more at

<http://www.tortoisegroup.org/megadiet.html>

- Converting a Tortoise from Vegetables to MegaDiet
- What If My Tortoise Won't Eat MegaDiet?
- MegaDiet Ingredients
- MegaDiet Sellers in the Las Vegas Area
- What's Wrong with Feeding My Tortoise Sweet Fruit?

No access to the web? Send a self addressed stamped envelope stating which information you desire. Betty Burge, 5157 Poncho Circle, Las Vegas, NV 89119. (1 stamp/4 sheets of paper)

Creative Tips on Introducing MegaDiet

- Soften MegaDiet to cookie dough consistency. Try unsweetened apple sauce or liquefied lettuce instead of water
- Grate apple to juicy state to soften MegaDiet. Yum!
- Soften and roll up in a grape leaf, rose petal or other favorite leaf (not lettuce)
- Hollow out half a cherry tomato and fill with softened MegaDiet
- Soften and stud the surface thickly with rose petals or desert willow flowers.
- Go cold turkey. No muss, no fuss.
- Email your tips to Kathy at kutiger@embarqmail.com

Remember that these tips are to get your tortoise started on MegaDiet. Later, gradually lessen the apple or juice so your tortoise eats plain MegaDiet.

MegaDiet Factoid

Our tortoises ate 2 ½ tons of MegaDiet in 2009!

Have You or Your email Address Moved?

Please remember to send us your new physical and email address kutiger@embarqmail.com.

MegaDiet Satellite Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Nellis & Owens | Georgi – 459 - 1274 |
| Decatur & Gowan | Toni – 277-6179 |
| 215 & Hualapai (new) | Lorrie – 528-5584 |
| Cheyenne & Durango | Susann – 205 -7576 |
| I-215 & Far Hills | |
| Kathy & Pauline – 804-0472, 9am – 7pm | |
| Rainbow & Alta | Kellie –353-5513 |
| 215 & Tropicana | Athena – 891-8585 |
| Tropicana & Maryland | Betty – 739-8043 |
| Dean Martin & Blue Diamond | |
| Carolyn – 876-0668, ext. 874 | |
| Eastern & Windmill | Patsy – 269-7108 |
| Silverado Ranch & S. Maryland Pkwy | |
| Helene – 878-7877 | |
| Boulder Hwy & Equestrian | |
| Gail – 334-0015 Cell | |
| Warm Springs & Lake Mead | |
| Gay – 563-1924 | |
| Boulder City (new) | Carol – 293-6494 |
| Pahrump | Sheri –775-727-5557 |
| Kingman, AZ | Toni – 928-757-8317 |

OnLine Store at:

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

No computer? Call Susan – 702-458-8382

A 1½ lb bag costing \$8.00 lasts a large desert tortoise about one month. MegaDiet is also sold at Tortoise Group meetings.

33% discount to TG members

Seeking Volunteers

- Charleston & Rancho
 - Green Valley
 - East & Southwest Las Vegas
- Call Betty at 739-8043

Big Changes in Tortoise Pickup Service

Who do I call to pick up a tortoise? In Fall 2009, the Clark County Commissioners cut costs by deciding to pick up only those tortoises for which they were responsible, the wild ones. So what happens to the rest of them? Unwanted pets and tortoises wandering in neighborhoods and other developed areas are picked up by the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC). All tortoises are taken to the DTCC where they are cared for. (See page 5 for more on the DTCC.)

Pet Tortoise Pickup Service: 488-9422

(Tortoises found in developed areas)

Wild Tortoise Pickup Service: 593-9027

(Tortoises found at the edges of development, on construction sites or roads through the wild desert)



“Wow dad! What big arms you have!” with Tucker and Izzy by Angela Jones

Tortoise Group to Help Solve Problems

Several agencies, including Tortoise Group, got together to find a solution to the tortoise pickup problem. Thus the Pet Tortoise Working Group (PTWG) came into existence. The US Fish & Wildlife Service, Clark County, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC), and Tortoise Group meet at least monthly to consider how best to protect the wild and pet tortoises. The current problem of overabundance of pet tortoises is at the head of the agenda. About 4000 are presently at the DTCC. Most of them are escaped or unwanted pets.

Wonderful, Wonderful Rain!

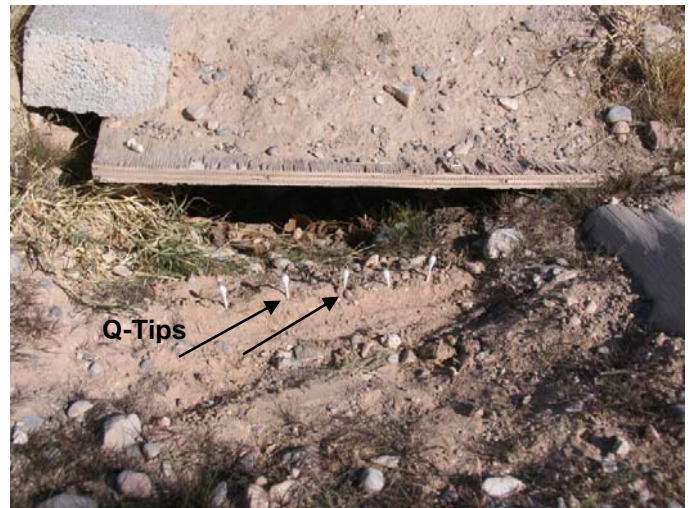
The rain was terrific for the desert, but did it wreak havoc with your burrow? Be sure to check your burrow carefully for collapse or other rain damage. It may be best to dig up the burrow and allow it to dry thoroughly, a matter of several sunny, warm (dry) weeks. For how to keep your tortoise sleeping until it is ready to get up, see Information Sheet #15, An Alternative Location for Brumation When an Outdoor Burrow Is Not Available.

Rebuilding a Burrow

If you are putting a burrow back together after a collapse, here is a tortoise housekeeping hint for you. When the burrow is ready to cover again with plywood, spread a 50-pound bag of "sand box" sand on the floor of the burrow. That will help the water drain away from the plastron and keep mud from adhering to the shell and weighing down the tortoise even if it did not encase the tortoise.

Did My Tortoise Come Out Today?

Stick a few Q-Tips in the dirt in a row in front of your tortoise's burrow. When the Q-Tips are knocked over, you'll know your tortoise came out!



Q-Tip barrier shows tortoise activity

Keep Your Tortoises from Escaping!

Call 739-8043 for good ideas

Spring Events

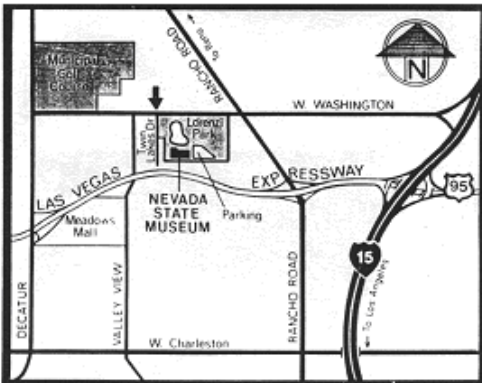
March 20, Saturday, 1-3 pm
Nevada State Museum in Lorenzi Park
700 Twin Lakes Drive LV 89107

Shaking Winter Out of Your Yard for the Tortoises by Betty Burge, M.S.

Betty tells us all about weeds: ones that are good food, important ones to remove. She'll help us with which plants to buy for our tortoise habitats

- Stock up for spring with your Tortoise Care Calendar, brand new Tortoise Group t-shirt, and MegaDiet
- Great refreshments
- **Free tortoise food plant for each person!**

Call Kathy at 804-0472 with questions



"Peeka" by Mikayla Whitmore

April 18, Sunday, 9:30 am – 11:30

Field Trip to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC)

Meet at Exploration Peak Park at 9:30; depart by carpool at 9:45 for the DTCC (directions below)

Don't be late, as only vehicles in the caravan will be admitted to the DTCC

Don't miss this unique opportunity to visit the DTCC. This facility not open to the public is now managed by the San Diego Zoo. Conservation Program Manager Dr. Paula Kahn will show us first hand how the facility has been improved in the past year. After a short presentation on site rules, she will take us for a tour to highlight the work that the zoo is conducting. We'll see lots of tortoises large and small!

Signup: We are limited to 40 people. Tortoise Group members will have priority. Email Kathy at kutiger@embarqmail.com or 804-0472 to sign up. Children are welcome!

- Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes, appropriate clothing for the outdoors including a hat and sunglasses, and bring a bottle of water (preferably a reusable one since the DTCC implements the values of Leave No Trace).
- All photographs you take are considered property of the San Diego Zoo. They may be shared with friends but not used for profit.

Directions:

From Blue Diamond Road, turn south on Buffalo Drive into Mountain's Edge development. Meet in the large parking lot at Exploration Peak Park on the east (left) side of the road. Look for the Tortoise Group sign. Please plan extra driving time. **Late-comers will not be accommodated.**

Desert Tortoise Conservation Center

By Dr. Paula Kahn

In March 2009, the San Diego Zoo's Institute for Conservation Research entered into a cooperative agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to operate the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) located in southwest Las Vegas. With its expertise in animal husbandry, superior veterinary staff, and world renowned scientists in conservation research, the San Diego Zoo offers new hope to the thousands of desert tortoises that pass through the doors of the DTCC. Their mission is not only to provide the best possible care for tortoises that are brought to the facility, but to play a critical role in the recovery of wild desert tortoises and their native Mojave habitat. That is a tall order, but with six highly qualified full-time staff members, seasonal help throughout the summers, and an army of volunteers and interns, they are well prepared to take on this challenge.

But the challenge is not just in saving wild populations. Each year the facility receives over 1000 desert tortoises from two desert tortoise hotlines operated in Clark County. Over 90% of the tortoises that are surrendered to the hotlines are pets, and half of them are hatchlings or juveniles. Sadly, most tortoises that are brought to the DTCC are in poor condition requiring months and sometimes years of rehabilitation due to improper care in captivity and, in most cases, the owners were devastated to learn that they were not providing the right heat, light, and nutrition to their tortoises that they loved so much.

The DTCC has a full time veterinary technician on site and a dedicated veterinarian at the zoo to evaluate and care for these sick tortoises, and we have seen substantial success and recovery in many of them. The DTCC has come a long way in the year that the San Diego Zoo has been operating it, and this is just the beginning.

Dr. Paula Kahn is a conservation program manager for the [San Diego Zoo's Institute for Conservation Research](http://www.sandiegozoo.org/institute-for-conservation-research). She has nearly a decade of experience working with North American tortoises (*Gopherus*

species). She is working hard on improving conditions at the DTCC and conducting important conservation research that will help save the Mojave desert tortoise.



"At the DTCC it takes teamwork!" Research associates Rachel Foster, Kirsten Dutcher, and Daniel Essary change the tortoise's bandage every week and assess how well it's healing.

Snooper Service

Where IS that tortoise? When our tortoises haven't come out when we expect, of course we start to worry. The collapse of the burrow ceiling and walls is the big threat if the tortoise has dug beyond the plywood roof. Please take these steps before calling Tortoise Group.

Step One: Check the burrow. Use a mirror to capture sunlight and direct it into the burrow. If you haven't tried this before, do start now. Find complete instructions in Information Sheet #28 www.tortoisegroup.org/infosheets/infosheet28.php Once you get the hang of it, it's easy and fun.

Step Two: Listen for tortoise movement. Slide a long pole into the burrow. Stop every few inches and listen for movement. If it moves, it's alive.

Step Three: Call Tortoise Group to come with the Snooper, a tiny video camera on a long cord. Tortoise Group charges \$25 a visit within the Las Vegas city area.

Snooper Team

Tortoise Group is seeking volunteers to provide the Snooper Service. We'll have a training in March and be ready to handle the many calls we expect after our rainy winter. The equipment is easy to use. Betty will teach you her many Snooper tricks and tips for finding tortoises in burrows. We'll want to have as many people as possible, so don't be shy. Sign up with Kathy today at kutiger@embarqmail.com or call Betty at 739-8043. You'll find working with tortoise people to be an exceptionally pleasant experience.

MegaDiet Bagging Day Postponed

The MegaDiet Bagging Day advertised on the Tortoise Care Calendar for March 6 has been postponed. The new date will be posted on our website and announced by email

Speaking of Email

Much of our day-to-day information is sent out by email. The Tortoise Tips, each one a brief note on seasonal care, have been praised by many as having a huge impact on education. If you haven't received any emails in 2010, then we do not have your correct email address. Please email Kathy at kutiger@embarqmail.com with any changes.

Wow! New Information Sheets!

A wealth of tortoise care information can be found in the Information Sheets that are listed on the inside cover of our booklet, *Desert Tortoises, Adoption and Care*, and on our website at www.tortoisegroup.org/infosheets/infosheets.php. You'll want to look at Information Sheet #35, External Examination Checklist for Signs of Deficiencies, Disease, or Injury. Soon after your tortoise emerges, give your tortoise a good examination using this checklist. If you are even considering acquiring a Sulcata, please read Information Sheet #36, Warning, Sulcatas Are a "Huge" Responsibility!

Free Yard Consultations

Call Betty at 739-8043



"Willie checking his flock" by Janet Chase
(Willie lives in Reno, NV)

Tortoise Death Can Fool You

Our sympathy for your loss if you have dug up a tortoise and found it did not make it through the rain and saturated soil. However, if you only looked in and thought the tortoise was dead, do not give up yet. Only the feet may be stuck. It is not too late to dig down on the outside of the burrow next to where the tortoise is probably resting and then horizontally through the wall. This hole is easier to patch after you have found the problem than removing all the roof soil.

Desert Garden Center on W Charleston
Open 3/5-5/31, 8 am-2 pm. Closing 6/1/10

Project *Gopherus agassizii*

Fourth graders at Henderson International and Bracken Elementary Schools are eagerly awaiting the emergence of their tortoises. In winter months they are still taking daily high and low temperature measurements, hoping to relate temperature to tortoise emergence. Soon they'll make comparisons with data taken in fall. They'll weigh and measure the tortoise and re-photograph the shell and look for new growth. Habitat maintenance remains an important element of this program, too.

Member Musings

New Membership Policy in Effect

Last year Tortoise Group leaped into the 21st century with a membership renewal system based on its database. Everyone will receive a notice of renewal about one month before one year has elapsed. People who have email addresses will receive notification by email; those without email will receive a letter. If you wish to join those who receive the newsletter by email, email Kathy Utiger.

We have included a Membership Application here in case you would like to give a donation or purchase a gift membership for someone.

Keep Our Database Up to Date
Email changes to kutiger@embarqmail.com

Give a Membership As a Gift

Can you think of someone you'd like to present with a gift membership to Tortoise Group? Just send us that person's contact information, especially the email address, and we'll surprise them with your gift. What a wonderful way to ensure good health for another tortoise.

Membership Committee

What activities would you like to take part in with Tortoise Group? Parties? More outings? Birthday celebrations? Home/habitat tours? What shall we do differently in 2010? If you have ideas and/or would like to take part on a Membership Committee, please email Kathy at kutiger@embarqmail.com or call 804-0472. Let's make this year special!

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

| | | | |
|--|--|---|----------------|
| Tortoise Group Membership Form | | | |
| Memberships and contributions may be tax deductible | | | |
| 1. Please Print the COMPLETE address | | | |
| Name _____ | | Phone _____ | |
| Address _____ | | | |
| City _____ | | State _____ | Zip Code _____ |
| E-mail _____ | | | |
| 2. Check One Newsletter Option | | 2010 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send my newsletter in hard copy, and send Tortoise Tips and other news by e-mail | | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 <input type="checkbox"/> Life \$500 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send my newsletter by e-mail | | Special Contribution: _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send my newsletter in hard copy | | | |
| 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 | | | |

Tortoise Group
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Las Vegas, NV 89119
702-739-8043

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

Spring Calendar for 2010

March 20 , Saturday - Shaking Winter Out of Your Yard for the Tortoises, by Betty Burge - 1-3 pm at the Nevada State Museum
Betty tells us about weeds that are good food, weeds important to remove, and what plants to buy for our tortoise habitats

April 3, Saturday - Spring in the Desert plant sale, 8 am - 2 pm
CSN Desert Garden Center, 6221 W. Charleston (just west of Jones)

April 18, Sunday - Desert Tortoise Conservation Center - 9:30 am
Fabulous field trip outing! Learn about the DTCC and then tour the facilities now run by the San Diego Zoo. See tortoises of all sizes. Children are welcome.

Details on page 4

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

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