



## TORT REPORT

**'Summertime, when the livin' is easy. '**

Porgy and Bess obviously never visited southern Nevada in the summer months. Human habitation in this area is a tight balance between retaining the natural ecosystems of the Mojave and making sure we have an air-conditioned in which to spend the day.

Fortunately for our chelonian friends, 25 million years of evolution have given them the ability to enjoy easy livin' in the summertime sans electricity. If you've got a tortoise as a pet, you know that they love to stay in their burrows when temps soar into the triple digits.

What does this mean for those of us hosting mini-dinosaurs? A properly built burrow is the key to a healthy and happy tortoise. Proper feeding and hydration is required, but don't underestimate the power of a good burrow. Remember, if your tortoise tries to escape frequently it probably means their burrow isn't working out for them. Would you want to stay in your kitchen if there were no air conditioning in that part of your house?

You can always contact Tortoise Group via phone (thank you Sherri for your hard work!!) or email if you have any questions concerning tortoise care. And of course, if you're contemplating adoption, give us a call. We'll hold your hand through the process, and you'll be helping the hundreds of tortoises in Nevada that need homes now.

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION STORY

"Let me say we love Love LOVE our tortoise. It is active and cute and comes out when we are outside and it's a little rascal and has gotten into some silly spots but it's adorable and we are so happy. Thank you for helping us to get this awesome pet! Of course the tortoise is digging in the garden, hiding behind the palms, stalking us at our patio door. But we just really are so happy and absolutely love it. We are extremely happy happy tortoise parents (and brothers)."

-Rachel Punchios



## GETTING READY FOR FALL!

Tortoise Group is committed to being and staying green by publishing only electronic versions of the newsletter.

All newsletters, including past editions, can be found at [TortoiseGroup.org](http://TortoiseGroup.org)

You can also register to receive email updates on our website or by emailing: [help@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:help@tortoisegroup.org)

Thank you for helping us keep our planet healthy!

## CURRENT HAPPENINGS

Hello again, Tortoise Enthusiasts! As we deal with the heat of the Mojave desert, I am constantly reminded of the delicate balance between survival and extinction. We are fortunate to belong to an organization founded in 1982 with the forward-thinking vision of educating and advocating for the desert tortoise - a species in a weird spot on the "survival/extinction" timeline. As of June 2017, there are an estimated 200,000 captive tortoises in Clark County. Of course, none of these animals can be put back into the wild (disease and breeding issues being the biggest reasons), so what exactly are we doing? We advocate for sterilization, and yet we have laws that make it illegal to even touch a tortoise in the wild. The answer is actually pretty simple: Keep wild tortoises wild and keep captive tortoises captive. Have a great summer!

Kobbe Shaw  
Executive Director

Executive Director



## Is your tortoise hungry?

Please contact sellers directly to pick up Tortoise Food.

TG Members receive a discount and a percentage of each sale benefits Tortoise Group.

Thank you for caring for your tortoise and supporting the efforts of Tortoise Group.

Nellis & Owens.....Georgi (702)459-1274  
Durango & Grand Teton.....Cathy (702)339-5012  
Craig & Cimmaron.....Annie (702)306-5096  
Decatur & Gowan.....Toni (702)277-6179  
Rainbow & Charleston.....Jamie (702)232-6289  
D.I. & Decatur.....Athena (702)682-0307  
2-15 & S Decatur.....Carolyn (702)378-6514  
2-15 & Windmill.....Diana (801)510-3526  
Russell & Pecos.....Sherri (702)339-9821  
Lake Mead & Van Wagenen.....Peggy (702)281-3048  
Boulder City.....Carol (702)293-6494  
Sparks.....Kym (775)762-3418  
S. Reno.....Tonya (775)813-0050  
Gardnerville.....Tricia (775)450-2259

**You can also shop at our online store  
24/7 @ [tortoisegroup.org](http://tortoisegroup.org)**

### BUSINESS LOCATIONS:

(Member pricing not available –tax added to price)

Boca Park Animal Hospital

Charleston & Rampart.....(702)675-7000

Creature Comforts Animal Hospital

Ann Rd & US-95.....(702)658-7339

Lone Mountain Animal Hospital

Rainbow & US-95.....(702)645-3116

Aloha Animal Hospital

S Torrey Pines & Warm Springs.....(702)567-5222

**Remember to soften your tortoise food with warm water  
until it is a juicy mash. Do not feed them dry pellets.  
Form it into a wedge for easy biting!  
Yuuuummmmy!!!**

# WHY STERILIZE YOUR CAPTIVE TORTOISE?

WHY STERILIZE? Mike Senn of US Fish & Wildlife answered our sterilization questions at the June 2016 General Meeting at Springs Preserve. One question on the minds of responsible tortoise custodians was: If my habitat is safe and secure, and I can ensure my tortoise is not getting out and another tortoise is not getting in, why should I sterilize my tortoise? The answer was: most tortoises will outlive their custodians since they can live in captivity for 80-100 years. While you may be a responsible tortoise owner, we cannot guarantee that of your tortoise's next custodian. What if the next custodian thinks your tortoise is lonely and wants a mate? That could easily lead to your tortoise being part of the backyard breeding epidemic rather than part of the solution. Sterilization is a simple strategy to stop this epidemic.

## Questions:

Kathi asks: *Will sterilization help a female tortoise who lays infertile eggs every year? She seems to have trouble laying her eggs.*

Answer: Sterilization takes away her organs and hormones to produce eggs so she will be less likely to search for a suitable habitat to lay her eggs. Sterilization also eliminates any risk of becoming egg bound in the future. A veterinarian can do an x-ray to see if she is egg bound or administer medication to help her lay eggs.

Kara asks: *Wild tortoises are a threatened species...can't we just release our unwanted tortoises into the wild?*

Answer: While that does seem like a logical solution, we don't release captive tortoises into the wild because they might be killed or they might infect other desert tortoise populations if they have the very contagious Upper Respiratory Tract Disease. We protect the desert tortoise because they were here before us, they are indicative of the health of the desert, they dig burrows that other species use and rely on, and we want to be able to pass them on to future generations. By releasing captive tortoises, we run the risk of harming wild desert populations for generations to come.







## BUYING EXOTICS? THINK TWICE

*This article was written by our founder, Betty Burge, ten years ago. It's just as relevant today as it was in 2007.*

One of the reasons that we do not adopt a male and female desert tortoise or adopt into a situation that will create a mating pair is because, in the small confines of a home yard that is something less than tens of acres, the female is continually harassed by the attentions of the male. She does not come out as often as she would if there was no male there, and therefore she does not eat as much as she should. Just recently we saw this behavior. Trying to collect the female without destroying her burrow took many days of watching and waiting. When the male and female were together in my home for a few hours he was attentive to the point of possible injury to the female, and I had to separate them. I mention this also because the cute little "Russian" tortoise that is commonly for sale is even more sexually aggressive and is not very discriminating when it comes

to which species he courts. So if you have a pair or a mix with a desert tortoise, count on having a very harassed and stressed female.

Another thought is about some species that you will need to keep warm in winter because they do not hibernate. These include the sulcata, leopard, and red-footed tortoises. What are your plans for building a warm room in your home with proper lights and heat source? If you are a parent, teaching your children humane treatment is an essential part of maintaining any pet.

Please think twice about acquiring an exotic unless you are prepared to find out about their year round needs from a reliable source. We can direct you to those experienced in proper care. Our experience with pet shops is that they do not have the best information and tend to encourage you to buy equipment for an indoor existence which is inappropriate for tortoises at any age unless you are providing for our winters when you have a non-hibernating tortoise.

-Betty Burge, 2007

# May Wellness Clinic

The May Wellness Clinic held May 10th, was one of the three free clinics being offered by Tortoise Group to Desert Tortoise custodians each season. This is the third year that Tortoise Group has offered this free clinic in conjunction with US Fish and Wildlife. The purpose of our Wellness Clinics is to offer free screening exams, micro-chipping and shell tagging of captive Mojave Desert Tortoises.

During the screening exams, advice is given as needed to the custodians on care and diet, and a referral to a veterinarian is offered if the screeners feel a more complete exam is required by a veterinarian. A list of veterinarians in the area who have training in treating the desert tortoise is made available. For those desert tortoises that are large enough, their custodians are offered a microchip as well as a shell tag, which are important to help escaped tortoises be returned to their custodians.

This May the Wellness Clinic was once again held at the Oquendo Center. US Fish and Wildlife provided a number of trained biologists, and Tortoise Group supplied the remainder of the volunteers. During the hours that we were in operation, there was a steady stream of custodians from Las Vegas and the surrounding areas. A grand total of 63 tortoises was seen, including 2 Russian tortoises. 40 desert tortoises had microchips implanted (the other tortoises were either too small or already had a microchip implanted). If you haven't brought your tortoise to a health check in the

last year, remember to do so at our final 2017 Wellness Clinic on September 23 to ensure the health of your pet. While tortoises may look fine to us, these experts are trained to notice the slight variations they see in the tortoises and can alert you of issues to watch.

A huge thanks to the volunteers who participated, including those from Tortoise Group: Ashley, Mary Ann, Kat, Marge, Liz, Kristi, Sherry, Caitlin, George, Laura, Osra, Shelly, Olivia, Michael, Cheryl, Kara, Sarah, Janina, Nadine and Bruce. And a big thanks to Flo Gardipee and her band of biologists. We could NOT have done this without you.

If you are interested in volunteering for our August Sterilization Clinic (Aug. 27-Sept. 6) and/or our September Wellness Clinic (Sept. 23), please send an email for additional information to:  
[diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org).



## LOST AND FOUND RAZOR

LAST SEEN IN HENDERSON OFF OF RACE TRACK AND  
BOULDER HIGHWAY AREA

# HERE'S GUIDELINES TO WARM TORTOISE TEMPS!

**Good-** 60-95 F ideal

**Okay** - 95-101 F If a tortoise is out above 95 F ground temperature, it is close to dangerous conditions. 95-101 F ground temperature tortoises need to find adequate shade, although they can survive these temps for a short time

**Dangerous-** 103-113 F is critical maximum body temperature. If body temperature reaches 103-113 F it is nearing fatality and could cause permanent damage

## SIGNS OF OVERHEATING

- Aggressive struggling by the desert tortoise  
( this can include digging out or under)
- Hot to the touch
- Frothing at the mouth / excessive salivation
- Or voiding its bladder

## PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

- Bring tortoise inside
- Soak with lukewarm water until tortoise moves itself out.
- If conditions persist after 1 hour take tortoise to the vet.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR DESERT TORTOISE PASSES AWAY?

Scientists and biologist across the southwest continue to study information concerning tortoises; there is a need for recently deceased tortoises for scientific purposes. If this unfortunate event happens to you and your family, please consider the simple gift that will help scientists and the general public for years to come. For more info, **please contact Kobbe Shaw at [kobbeshaw@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:kobbeshaw@tortoisegroup.org)**

## WEBSITE AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Our new website is up and running. Please be aware that old and new users will be required to create a new password. You may not have picked one yet. Simply click on the link "Lost your password?" and enter your email to reset your password. Didn't get an email after a few minutes? Send a quick email to [help@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:help@tortoisegroup.org) requesting a password reset (you can even put "password reset" in the subject line and just put your first and last name in the email and we'll know what to do!) We'll manually reset your password and send it to you in an email.

Please continue to let us know issues that come up when using the website and we'll be sure to address each and every one of them. This website is for you. Our goal is to have tortoise information easily available at your fingertips. Thank you for your patience.

## NEWS FROM THE SATELLITE SELLERS

Being a satellite seller for Tortoise Group is a fun way to volunteer your time. All you need to do is have the tortoise feed on hand and when tortoise owners call, you arrange for the buyer to meet you to purchase and pick up the food. At the end of the month, if you had any sales, you send your completed sales form with a check for the amount of your sales to Kobbe.

I have found this to be a fantastic way to meet other tortoise lovers and to share experiences with others about your favorite pets ever. Satellite sellers live all over the valley so it is a very convenient way for people to purchase food in their area. It is so easy to call a seller and just arrange a convenient time for pick up.

The easiest way to find a satellite seller is to go onto our website to locate a seller near you and give them a call!



# Someday...Well, That Day Arrived Quickly...

I received an email from Tortoise Group for a volunteer opportunity. I was hesitant at first about agreeing to volunteer for an item that sounded really laborious and out of my field of expertise. After all, collecting Ambrosia Dumosa Seed to be used on a burned area project was not something I had on my resume. I couldn't be more wrong.

Wow - what an experience. It was pretty incredible. Dianne and the two field biologists (who incidentally, really love what they do) and a handful of great support members and myself, met at a remote site in far west Henderson. If you sneezed, you would miss it for there was not really anything but mountains around and no shops.

Although none of us were marathon runners or avid desert hikers, I learned very quickly that 8 folks could do incredible things. Within 5 hours, WE MET OUR GOAL and collected a ton of seeds that partially filled a pickup. Each seed was half the size of a pea and was as light as a small feather, so it took a lot of seeds to fill bags that filled half of a pickup...There were a lot of seeds!!!

Why was it important to gather the seeds? GBI (Great Basin Institute) field team members are spearheading an exciting research project on desert burn areas that will take the harvested seeds and allow the animals to store them for food below ground which will help the seeds germinate and hence increase the number of Ambrosia Dumosa plants. This could potentially promote the species of plants and directly restore the habitat that was burned and indirectly service the tortoises along with other species. It's exciting to see the innovation here, especially when the impact to the environment is low and the benefits can be high.

It was a great experience to work with the two biologists and Dianne as well as, the invaluable supporting team members who volunteered their time. Everyone enjoyed working together and the work was fun. Additionally, the leaders shared their extensive knowledge on the habitat which made it much more than just collecting seeds. I learned that there are a lot of different species of plants and cacti abound in a very short radius. Some with colors you could only imagine, purples, yellows, and pastels.

Additionally, you would think one species of Ambrosia plants should look the same - they don't. I also learned that the environment is a pretty fragile ecosystem and we should be careful on our approach in everything we do, after all, it's shared by many, many lives not just us. I wish that we carefully manage land for all future life to share and respect along the way.

On the negative side, I noticed a lot of cans and bottles. If you don't know this we should all take care of disposing our waste by, ideally, recycling. If you have the opportunity picking up one piece of litter on public land can make a huge difference in the world.

I trust the fellowship of the teams and look forward in their service moving ahead. We are lucky to have stewards like Sara and Matt with the GBI (Great Basin Institute) who try minimal risk approaches to effect great benefits for the health and safety of our environment and animals which give us more than we sometimes do in return.

I personally want to thank the team (Dianne, Sara, Matt, Leigh, Sue, Curtis and Karen) for their love, time, and support for the environment. Also, a special thank you to BLM (Bureau of Land Management) for their enormous contribution everywhere. Finally, thank you Tortoise Group for your sponsorship here. I look forward to hearing the results.

Sincerely,  
George B. Baker



Thank you to our community partners for all your help and support.  
We appreciate you!

## WHAT TO EXPECT EACH SEASON FROM YOUR DESERT TORTOISE



As you anxiously wait to see your tortoise emerge from brumation, check your yard for debris and hazards. Plant some new flowers or desert plants. Remember to weigh your tortoise when they emerge and mark down the date of emergence. When they are awake and active, offer water for a soak. Let them tell you when they are ready to eat. After you notice they have started browsing on their own, it's time to offer tortoise chow!



You're probably noticing that your tortoise comes out earlier in the morning or later in the evening. Sometimes, your tortoise may even sleep in. It takes a lot of energy to stay cool, so your tortoise may not be as active. It's time to weigh and measure your tortoise and remember to give them weekly soaks to stay hydrated. Check your gate barriers to make sure your tortoise is safe.



As the weather cools, your tortoise may not be as interested in food. Continue to soak your tortoise. Check nurseries for plant sales. This is a great time to get some new plants established - when your tortoise won't be eating them up! Make sure your burrow is snug and safe. A snug burrow will keep your tortoise insulated all winter long. Males may be active during this time, so make sure your yard is secure and safe.



Northern Nevada tortoises will be snuggled in their containers in garages while Southern Nevada tortoises should be in their outdoors habitat. Periodically check for debris that could be swept into the burrow opening from gusty winds. Don't block the burrow opening. If it's raining, tortoises may come out of brumation for a quick drink. The ideal winter temperature for brumation is 30-50 degrees Fahrenheit, so allow your tortoise to chill out during the winter season.

# TORTOISE GROUP

**I WANT TO SUPPORT TORTOISE GROUP  
PLEASE RENEW MY MEMBERSHIP!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

☐

\$25

☐

\$40

☐

\$70

☐

\$100

☐

\$250

☐

\$1000 (life membership)

Additional Donation \$: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to Tortoise Group and return with this form.

**Thank you for all  
your support!**

Please return  
completed form to:  
Tortoise Group  
PO Box 530478  
Henderson, NV 89053-0478





# STERILIZATION CLINIC

@ The Oquendo Center  
2425 E Oquendo Rd. Las Vegas, NV 89120

## INTAKE:

**Sunday, August 27 from 9am-3pm**

**Monday, August 28 from 8am-1pm**



Sterilization of tortoises is a safe, effective way to prevent overbreeding in backyard habitats. Prior to any type of surgery, each tortoise must be evaluated for size and health. Your tortoise is invited to attend the Tortoise Group Sterilization Clinic for a free health check and evaluation.

**Each tortoise that participates (whether or not they are a candidate for sterilization) will receive a free health check, microchip and external shell tag!**

Please do not offer your tortoise food or water the morning that you will be bringing him or her to the clinic.