



# TORTOISE GROUP NEWS

VOLUME XXX NO. 6 MAY 2017

## TORT REPORT

Ever wonder where your tortoise came from? If you've recently adopted a tortoise from Tortoise Group, odds are that at some point your tortoise spent time in our Emergency Habitat.

The Emergency Habitat was originally constructed by Kathy Utiger, Tortoise Group volunteers and some professional landscaping expertise donated by Richard McCreedy in early 2015. From the original 20 pens in 2015 it has grown into a fully functioning rescue operation, complete with an intake section, quarantine area and a long-term care facility.

Tortoise Group volunteers Annie and Jeff coordinated with over 20 volunteers to complete phase 3 of the Emergency Habitat construction. This is the only desert tortoise rescue center in the state of Nevada.

Where is the habitat, and why does it have to be a secret? Outside of the handful of volunteers that run the Emergency Habitat, the location of the habitat is not public knowledge. The reason is two-fold: primarily, the owners of the property are two wonderful Clark County residents that decided to donate some of their land for the use of tortoise rescue. We want to honor their wishes and ensure that their property is treated like any other private property - left alone!!! The second reason is that the governmental organizations that deal with desert tortoises unanimously decided to keep further tortoise-re-homing locations away from the public after the closure of the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center in 2014.

No other organization is working this closely with desert tortoises in Nevada (nor is any other organization permitted to do so). Tortoise Group's habitat is successful because of the donations of people like you and the volunteer work of folks like Annie and Jeff.



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

## GETTING READY FOR SUMMER!

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!

## GREENFEST

On April 22, Tortoise Group was at Downtown Summerlin for GreenFest. There were numerous contributors there, including wellness booths, booths for recycling opportunities and groups for animal protection. Our volunteers had the opportunity to increase understanding of the desert tortoise to visitors, answer questions about the DT and encourage membership and adoption. The weather was spectacular for the festival which encouraged a strong attendance.

Every spring there are a number of expos of this type in Las Vegas and Tortoise Group attends many. We had one final outreach event on May 6th, the Las Vegas Science and Technology at the Cashman Center.

If you are interested in volunteering to represent TG in the future, please email the volunteer coordinator: [diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org)

Many thanks to: Nadine, Bruce, Michael and Athena who represented Tortoise Group at this event.



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!  
**Yuuuummy!!!**

## 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  
Charleston & Casino Center.....Trilla (702)528-2237  
2-15 & WTropicana.....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

# WAKING UP FROM BRUMATION IN NORTHERN AREAS

**Hello from Reno! What a cold, wet winter we had! I don't know about you, but I have missed my friend.**

Each tortoise is different, but they should wake up anytime in May. There are a few things you can do before they wake up. First, clean out their burrow of any trash, leaves or any critters that decided to find shelter inside of it during winter. Also, check the plywood on the top of the burrow to make sure it is not sagging or damaged and isn't in need of replacement. You don't want it collapsing on your tortoise. Consider contacting a satellite seller for Grassland food so you have it when they wake up. As the weather warms up, keep

checking on your tortoise. You might start to hear them or notice their eyes are starting to open and then you know they are ready to come out for their first good soak. Fill your container with warm water just above the bottom of their shell and let them drink for about 20 minutes (like you did before they brumated). You should do this several times throughout the week to re-hydrate them. It's ok if they don't eat right away, or even the first few days. They are cold blooded animals so their body temperature needs to warm up before they are able to digest food. If they are not eating after a week get them into your vet. Just remember, drinking before food! Since our nighttime temperatures and daytime temperatures can vary by a

huge difference you will have to do a lot of in and out of the house for at least the first month. Do not let your tortoise stay outside (even in his/her burrow) if the nighttime temperature is going to get below 45°. So at night they can stay inside your house in a box and then they can go back out in the morning. Likewise, if the daytime temperature is going to be below 60° -65° they should not go outside either. This strange weather variation shouldn't last long before they can spend the rest of the summer outside. Just remember to put your brumation box somewhere safe so you can use it again in about 6 months.

Kym McDonough  
Northern Nevada Adoptions  
Coordinator

## ADOPTION AND BURROW BUILDING BY VOLUNTEERS



## TORTOISE GROUP AT THE SPRING MOUNTAIN RANCH STATE PARK - SPRING FLING

On April 1st, the Spring Mountain Ranch State Park held their Spring Fling. The park is a lovely setting, tucked back into the red rocks just south of Red Rock Canyon. The docents of this State Park put the Spring Fling on for Las Vegas families. There were numerous areas for the kids—and their parents—to participate in activities, both physical and educational. Tortoise Group was excited to be a part of this day.



The weather was clear but a bit windy. There was a rescued “wild” burro, rangers on horseback and Abigail, the desert tortoise. Our Tortoise Group volunteers were able to answer many questions about the desert tortoise and explain our role in re-homing captive tortoises. Abigail was content to be fed flower tidbits (brought from home) and explore the grassy picnic area for hours. She appeared to have the best time. And Abigail made it into the Las Vegas Review Journal on April 2.

Many thanks to our volunteers: Shelly, Chantal and Michael.

## TORTOISE GROUP AT THE SPRINGS PRESERVE

For our second year, Tortoise Group has been a presence at Springs Preserve. Almost every Saturday in April, one of our volunteers has educated visitors to the Preserves on the Mojave Desert Tortoise. While one of our tortoises roams around the Gardens Amphitheater, visitors stop by to ask questions about the DT and have the opportunity to touch a tortoise and maybe feed a nibble to it (we bring tortoise snacks with us).

Many visitors have never seen a DT and getting to see one up close stimulates many great questions—as well as folklore. This is a perfect opportunity for our volunteers to clear up misconceptions about the DT, explain the difference between captive and wild tortoises, and explain the role of Tortoise Group. It is also an ideal opportunity to share our website with visitors who may have additional questions.

Our scheduled time is 3:00-4:00pm, but I have found that, because there are so many visitors with questions, we frequently go over! We have a number of Saturdays in September and October for which we need volunteers. Anyone who would like to participate in this wonderful outreach program, please email: [diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org).

# TORTOISE GROUP HOTLINE

## What's the most important thing when you have a question concerning your tortoise?

You want a human being that actually answers the phone when you call. Being the lifeline to someone in need, whether the question is just where to find food, what do desert tortoises eat, how can I make a burrow correctly or where can I find a veterinarian for my tortoise makes this a rewarding volunteer job. Other questions we sometimes get run from why hasn't he come out yet, I found a tortoise, I want to adopt a tortoise or, sadly, I cannot care for my tortoise anymore.

This position is very easy to do. All we ask is for you to give one week a month to answering the hot line, Sunday through Saturday, minimum business hours, or longer if you can. It is fun to get to know other tortoise lovers like yourself and you really can calm the fears of most of the callers. You can use your own phone and answer from anywhere. If you know you may not be able to answer during a certain period of time, you have a recorded message and you call the caller back as soon as possible. Of course, once in a while there are issues that come up that only Kobbe or Sarah can solve, so, you explain to the caller that someone will get back to them. And you notify Kobbe or Sarah of the issue. And sometimes it is as easy as referring them to our fantastic website.

You won't be bored for sure. One of my favorite calls was when a lady was out walking in the desert with her dog and the dog found a small tortoise. The dog bit the shell and put a hole in it. The woman was so upset that she brought the tortoise home and called us asking what to do. We picked it up from her and took it to a vet and then fostered it for two weeks until the antibiotics worked. After the tortoise was healed, we put it right back where that woman found it as she was able to give us accurate GPS coordinance. We took photos of the release and forwarded them to her as she was extremely concerned about the little guy.

**We always need more  
volunteers to staff the Hotline.  
Please consider volunteering.  
You will have a great time  
I guarantee it!  
If you would like to help out,  
please email our  
Volunteer Coordinator:**

**[diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:diannemclain@tortoisegroup.org)**

## LOST AND FOUND LUCKY

WAS LAST SEEN NEAR LAMBOURNE CT.  
(MANALANG & PEBBLE) IN LAS VEGAS, NV.



# HELLO FELLOW TORTOISE ENTHUSIASTS!

We are well on our way into summer and active season for our tortoises. As we get into the hotter months, take a moment and consider that your tortoise is cold-blooded and needs to stay cool! We often forget that tortoises can overheat, make sure you've got your water dish in the shade and your burrow is free from obstructions. We can go into the air-conditioned confines of our homes - our tortoises don't always have that luxury!

I'd like to recognize Dr's Taylor Francher and Rene Hussey from Creature Comforts Animal Hospital. Rene and Taylor are helping Tortoise Group by conducting health assessments on every tortoise that we adopt out. This is no small task! Thank you both for your dedication to our state's favorite animal!

Our wild conservation programs are growing and we need volunteers! Contact Dianne McLain or me if you're interested in conservation efforts - we always need help.

## 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!

Finally, Tortoise Group is looking for additional corporate partners. If you work with an environmentally-friendly company (or one that wishes to be) please contact me at [kobbeshaw@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:kobbeshaw@tortoisegroup.org). We are looking to expand some more programs and this is a great opportunity for corporate sponsorship.

Thank you for your support!  
Kobbe Shaw  
Executive Director

## 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.

## 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)**

# BORN TORTOISE GROUP

As a new resident here since 2014, I am finishing my first year serving on the Tortoise Group Board and assume I'm probably a new face to most of you. Working with Kobbe and the Board has been a great experience. I've enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the Desert Tortoise and the opportunity of sharing my marketing and nonprofit board experience. Everyone is so enthusiastic in support of our reptile friend. And the dedication of the many volunteers who give of their time and have long standing with the Tortoise Group is very motivating. It is clear how much everyone loves the Desert Tortoise.

Close family friends were very active in the Bronx Zoo and one year they asked us to foster two rare African tortoises to spend the winter in our house cared for by my mom. My fascination with tortoises and turtles began. Once the tortoises went back to the zoo our Bronx Zoo friends helped me build an aquarium stocked with two unusual looking turtles they got for me but I do not remember the species name. When it came time for college I packed up the aquarium with the two turtles (Max and Mable), and my two show champion Cocker Spaniels (mother and daughter Penny and Rosie) and went off to University of Pennsylvania. My menagerie only grew during the years after college.

I've volunteered with animal based organizations most of my life, notably as a Board Director from 1985 to 2000 and as President from 2008-2011 for the American Spaniel Club Inc, a national not for profit AKC/Global parent club breed for cocker spaniels founded in 1881. I was also the founding member of the 501c3 American Spaniel Club Foundation and am still serving as Communications Chair in support our mission of creating a national rescue network for spaniels and funding health research into canine diseases especially prevalent in spaniels.

I have grown to think that our beloved Desert Tortoise, the *Gopherus agassizii* with its ability to conserve and adapt, is the original environmentalist and conservationist in Clark County. As an environmental activist, I think they are a great role model for our own human efforts in this regard. In a world dealing with global warming, Desert Tortoises can survive in a climate where temperatures can exceed 140° Fahrenheit. Unlike us, they have no need for air conditioning. They stay cool using the earth itself. While we are concerned with drought and falling water levels in Lake Mead, our tortoises are the ultimate water conservationist. They can survive a year or more without

water and are lucky enough to obtain water mostly from the moist grass and other vegetation they eat. Unfortunately, there isn't much we can do about our biology and our inability to adapt in that regard. But, on the other hand, do we think we are so smart building Hoover dam? I've learned our tortoises dig catchment basins in the dirt of the Mojave to capture what little rainfall there is in the desert. When it rains they go to these basins to obtain the precious water. How smart is that! Their own personal Lake Mead! And talk about being chill. Tortoises know how to conserve energy vs. the hamster wheel of life many of us feel we live. They take time to enjoy life – maybe we can learn from them in that regard, too.

Living here in Clark County means many of us live in suburbs filled with subdivisions and shopping centers yet tortoises are in many ways the original urban planner. Rather than congregating in groups without concern for sustainability, they prefer to live where the soil is ideal for digging burrows. As I've learned this soil quality influences the density of desert tortoise populations. Brilliant!

Sadly, for many reasons, Desert Tortoises are threatened. But in a world of shrinking resources and global warming, we too are threatened. I look forward to working with all of you in caring for captive tortoises and spreading the word on the wonders of the Desert Tortoise in support of the preservation of their environment and ours. Little did I know when I joined Tortoise Group, that the desert tortoise, the five million year resident of Clark County and our state reptile, is the original environmentalist and conservationist. They should be an inspiration to us all.

Charlie Born  
TG Board Member

# 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)

**Thank you for all  
your support!**

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



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

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