

## Fort Irwin Translocation Update

Recently you may have heard bad news about the fate of translocated desert tortoises within Fort Irwin in California. However, biologists working on the project reported at the Desert Tortoise Council meeting this year that the death rate among translocated tortoises showed no significant difference from the death rate of resident tortoises in the same areas.

Deaths were substantial due to the prolonged period without sufficient rain for plants to flourish, plants upon which rodents, rabbits and other prey species feed. When plants are few, the small animals do not reproduce. As a result of this low food supply, a common predator, the coyote, has been forced to prey upon a less favored prey, the desert tortoise.



*"You Talkin' to me!" with Zeke by Michelle Yiatras*

This was another example of the press sensationalizing and misrepresenting facts.

## Don't Move Wildlife:

### Human-Wildlife Conflicts Increase with Urbanization

By C. Douglas Nielsen and Kelly Clark, 775-688-1555

Nevada Department of Wildlife [www.ndow.org](http://www.ndow.org)

It's no secret that Nevada's once sparse human population has exploded over the past 20 years as new residents arrived, and with that growth came a new challenge for wildlife managers, managing human-wildlife conflicts. These conflicts most often occur where human habitat overlaps wildlife habitat. An example occurs when a hungry coyote or bobcat makes a meal out of someone's dog or cat on the outskirts of Las Vegas or when a rattlesnake seeks the cool shade of a covered porch.

Translocation of wild animals may seem like an easy answer to a growing problem, but NDOW Director Ken Mayer said moving animals from one place to another is more difficult than it seems. Doing so also involves a lot of risk for the animal and can spread disease.

"Every time we make a decision to move an animal there is a risk involved. The animal may face aggression from resident animals at the release site, competition for limited resources like food and

**continued on p.2**

## Don't Move Wildlife: Continued from p.1

water, elevated stress levels, and susceptibility to diseases. There is also the chance that a translocated animal may introduce new diseases into the resident wildlife population,” Mayer said.

There also are legal ramifications the average person probably isn't aware of. For instance, it is illegal to deliberately relocate raccoons, foxes, coyotes or skunks because they are recognized rabies vector species. Moving them could introduce rabies into animal populations at the release site, which in turn could transmit the disease to humans.

“Our goal as the state wildlife agency is to manage for the safety of entire populations of wildlife, not one individual animal. Consequently, if we decide to release an animal into the wild it must improve survival prospects of the existing wild population. Long-term wildlife conservation interests are best served by ensuring the survival of as many individuals as possible, not just the short-term status of a few individuals,” said Mayer.

(excerpted from the article)

## From the Editor: Translocation of Our Desert Tortoises

- Translocation of desert tortoises is under the jurisdiction of the federal government-- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which directs when, where, and how many desert tortoise can be translocated.
- Translocation of tortoises elsewhere in the world has proven to be successful.
- Translocation in southern Nevada has also proven to be successful. After monitoring individuals it has been determined that mortality among translocated tortoises is no greater than mortality among the resident tortoises on the translocation site.
- Tortoises raised in captivity seem to do as well as wild tortoises moved from construction site.
- Every tortoise that is translocated has tested negative for Upper Respiratory Disease.



*“King of All He Surveys”  
with Winnebago by  
Marilyn Benoit*

## Question Corner by Betty Burge

**Question:** Do Tortoises Talk?

**Answer:** Yes, tortoises do make vocal sounds and these sounds have been recorded. You may have heard the males' vocalizations during mating, but most people cannot hear the numerous sounds that tortoises make. They have been described as grunts, pops, pinks, low cries, and long calls. These have been heard or recorded during fights between males, when a tortoise is overturned, when attempting to free itself when tangled in a towel, and when a sleeping tortoise was grabbed. Sounds we commonly hear are from respiratory problems, harmless whistles, and a sharp release of breath when surprised.

**Question:** You may find a tortoise crossing a road in a developed area or you may find a tortoise in your yard that is not yours. What should you do to help that tortoise?

**Answer:** The tortoises in both these situations are not to be kept but are to be turned over to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC). Staff there have been contracted by the Clark Count

Desert Conservation Program to pick up such tortoises and take them to the Holding Facility at the DTCC. If the owner with a lost tortoise calls the Pick-up Service number, 593-9027, their tortoise may be one of the many turned in each year and can be returned to the owner. Having your telephone number on your tortoise, in a way we suggest, increases the likelihood that the tortoise will be returned. See our Information Sheet #5, Marking Your Tortoise, at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/new/infosheets/infosheet05.html>. Lost Tortoise Prevention Kits will be sold at our May 17th meeting and are available through our OnLine Store.

Tortoises that are never claimed are available for adoption by Tortoise Group or are released under a controlled authorized program. Please keep the 593-9027 number on your refrigerator. You may be the next one to rescue a tortoise from a city street. Tortoises found crossing roads through undeveloped desert are not to be rescued. They are moving within the area where they live and know where they are going.

## Membership — Please Note!

- Thanks for your patience! If you have sent in your membership application accompanied by a check, it may take longer than you expect for that check to clear. We have a new system and new personnel, and we're still ironing out the bugs.
- When you send in your membership, soon as possible we enter your name in the database and inform all Satellite Sellers of the new status. You can purchase MegaDiet at the member price.
- We no longer send membership cards, although you will eventually receive an acknowledgment of your contribution. We haven't sent them out yet.
- Members use their email address for entrance to the member area of the website – and discount prices.

## Spicing Up Your Habitat

You may be surprised at the number of beautiful ornamentals that are eaten by tortoises. See our Information Sheet #21, Plants to Grow for Tortoises, at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/new/infosheets/infosheet21.html>. These plants are especially important when your tortoise is taking its time accepting MegaDiet, the complete chow for tortoises. Take our list to the nursery to help with shopping. If you have several tortoises, they may have individual preferences. Buy several species to give them all a choice. If you live in tortoise country, you should be able to purchase a beautiful native shrub, Desert Willow, *Chilopsis linearis*. It flowers all season and is not really a willow. Pick a handful of blossoms for your tortoise every day. They like them fresh. You can't lose with dandelions, nutritious and accepted eagerly by even the newest hatchling.

## MegaDiet Satellite Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment

Nellis & Owens

Decatur & Gowan

215 & Lone Mtn

215 & Far Hills

215 & W. Tropicana

Rainbow & Alta

Dean Martin & Blue Diamond

Tropicana & Maryland

Eastern & Windmill

Silverado Ranch & S. Maryland Pkwy

Boulder Hwy & Equestrian

Warm Springs & Lake Mead (Henderson)

Boulder City

Pahrump

Kingman, AZ

Georgi – 459-1274

Toni – 277-6179

Lynn – 655-5698

Kathy & Pauline – 804-0472,  
9am – 7pm

Athena- 891-8585

Kellie – 353-5513

Carolyn – 876-0668, ext. 874

Betty – 739-8043

Patsy – 269-7108

Helene – 878-7877

Gail – 334-0015 Cell

Gay – 563-1924

Carol - 293-6494

Sheri – 775-727-5557

Toni – 928-757-8317



*"Moses & the Giant Tortoise" with Moses by Boni Forte*

### 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.

## What Are Tortoise Biologists Learning From Desert Tortoise Studies?

We want to recommend a website that may be of interest to you <http://www.deserttortoise.org>. Members of the Desert Tortoise Council are mainly professionals whose work includes many aspects of biology, behavior, and conservation of desert tortoises native to Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah and Mexico. Each year Council members meet and deliver accounts of their work. These talks are published and available on disk as the Proceedings of the Desert Tortoise Council Symposium for each year from 1976 through 2009.

You can read the short abstracts of these talks on the website under Symposium Abstracts. Disks may be purchased through the Council's website. If you would like to read the entire text of any presentations, Tortoise Group has hard copies 1976 through 2003. You may borrow them if you live in the Las Vegas area. Contact Betty at 702-739-8043 to arrange for pickup.

The Desert Tortoise Council website has many other features that may be of even greater interest to you. We highly recommend that you look in on it.



## Tortoise Health is Hard to Read

You may not realize that your tortoise is not quite up to par. A tortoise may not show or act debilitated. One hidden cause of debilitation is intestinal parasites. Your tortoise may have a super abundance in number or kind that are causing problems invisible to you.

A home yard is much smaller than a tortoise's home range in the wild, and from other conditions in a yard situation you may be fostering the reinfestation by parasites that have been passed in the feces (scats).

If you are fortunate enough to have a veterinarian who treats tortoises, the diagnosis and treatment would be part of their practice. In the Las Vegas area we have more than a dozen veterinarians to help you. For the list, go Information Sheet# 24, Area Veterinarians with Tortoise Experience, at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/new/infosheets/infosheet24.html>. We will be privileged to have Dr. Christine Kolmstetter of the Cheyenne West Animal Hospital speak at our June 14th meeting. She will emphasize the prevention and treatment of intestinal parasites. See the Spring Events for details.

### OVER THE HEDGE



## Why Can't I Put My Tortoise in the Wild?

Two unfortunate and preventable consequences occur from private individuals releasing their unwanted pet tortoises into wild desert. One is the spread of the very communicable Upper Respiratory Tract Disease, which may not be evident in the pet tortoises. The other consequence is the tragedy of adding tortoises to an area that is not providing enough food for the wild tortoises already living there. All

unauthorized releases are against the law and come with a fine.

The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center will accept tortoises that you can no longer keep or those found wandering in developed areas. The Center's Pickup Service will come to your home for those tortoises. Call 593-9027 and leave your message.

## SPRING EVENTS

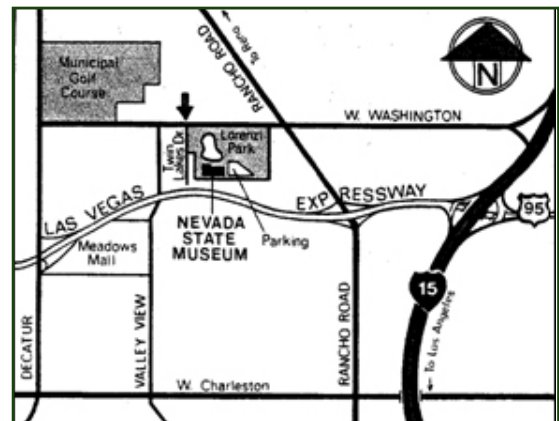
Nevada State Museum & Historical Society  
700 Twin Lakes Drive (in Lorenzi Park)  
Call Kathy at 804-0472 for directions

**Please note that the May and June meetings will be on Sunday**

### May 17, Sunday

**How a City Girl Became a Desert Rat and Joined the San Diego Zoo to Help Give Desert Tortoises a Fighting Chance!** By Paula Kahn, PhD

Paula, as the new Director of the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC), will discuss the vision and goals that the San Diego Zoo has established for turning the DTCC into a world-renowned research and care facility for desert tortoises and how they will contribute to the recovery of the species.



### June 14, Sunday

**Parasites and Other Tortoise Dwellers**

Dr. Christine Kolmstetter, DVM  
Cheyenne West Animal Hospital

Do you miss those wonderful newsletter articles by veterinarian and tortoise expert Dr. Kolmstetter? Hear her in person as she describes the very important interactions between parasites, tortoises, other pets, and humans.

You can access one newsletter article each month by Dr. Kolmstetter in the Newsletter Archives from March 2006 -August 2008 at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/new/newsletter.html>.



*"Perfection in the Palm of a Hand" with Tonka II by Marilyn Benoit*

## Volunteer at the Wetlands

The Wetlands has opportunities for volunteers to work on various improvements that are part of the ongoing development of the Las Vegas Wash. Wetlands are among the most productive of natural environments. Preventing periodic devastating from erosion when we have our floods is so important to maintaining the integrity of wetland habitat for hundreds of species that depend upon this oasis. A delight full place to visit, too. To find out more about when and how you can help, contact the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC).  
[http://www.lvwash.org/cfml/volunteer/volunteer\\_signup.cfml](http://www.lvwash.org/cfml/volunteer/volunteer_signup.cfml)

## Thank You

from Betty and Kathy

Betty and I have received many emails and notes from members and friends of the tortoise thanking us for the work we do. We appreciate very much your kind words.

Although the two of us do a lot, we are only two of a number of very dedicated volunteers who make this organization tick. Let us pass on to all you volunteers the heartfelt thanks we receive.

### 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

2009

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

#### 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**

Tortoise Group  
5157 Poncho Circle  
Las Vegas, NV 89119  
702-739-8043  
[www.tortoisegroup.org](http://www.tortoisegroup.org)



Editor Kathy Utiger

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