Hatchling Time is Here!

Soon those adorable little hatchlings will make their appearance. Families already loaded with little ones will look for someone to take those babies, and most will end up dead. Please remember that one must prepare for a tortoise before receiving one. Popping one into an aquarium “just for now” is not a humane situation. And please, do not let the children take the babies to school to give away like cookies. Call the Tortoise Pickup Service at 593-9027. They will take the hatchlings to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center where they will be taken care of or adopted.

Healthy tortoises live outside from the time they hatch
Use special roof tiles as burrow starters. Buy from Tortoise Group.
MegaDiet is important food to feed tortoises.
August may yield hatchlings; don’t wait to build the enclosure.
No aquariums needed, destroy them. They are killing chambers.
Enclosure directions are in TG Adoption and Care Booklet, May 2007
Collect dandelions to plant in the enclosure. See TG Information Sheet #13
Always ready for questions, 702 739-8043, tortoisegroup@att.net
Remember, tortoise abuse is easy. Learn more to help your tortoise and others.
Eliminate all yard poisons; they’re not needed

Support that wanderlust of hatchlings. Give them the freedom of the yard and see how quickly they find the back door and come back for daily MegaDiet, each day losing a little more fear as you feed them. They know what to do with cactus pads and willow flowers, too. Contact us: 702-739-8043, tortoisegroup@att.net

Please join Tortoise Group’s online community at Facebook. This is a place where we can share ideas, event information, photos and so much more. If you already have a Facebook account, just type Tortoise Group into the search box and press enter. You may also find our Facebook Page by following this link http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tortoise-Group/100473688476
Tortoise Care Calendar Coming!

The July meeting for kids produced terrific tortoise pictures, 17 of which will grace our new calendar. Available about September 1, the calendar features 10-15 care, behavior and TG facts each month, September 2009 – December 2010. At only $10, you’ll never find a handier, more informative tortoise reference for seasonal care. Sponsored by Reliant Energy. Order online www.tortoisegroup.org/new/sales/intoshop.php or pick one up at the September meeting.

October Plant Sale

The Desert Garden Center has given Tortoise Group the opportunity to buy plants before the official start of the October Plant Sale. These Mojave natives and other desert-adapted plants are the perfect way to spruce up your habitat. Plants tortoises like will be specially flagged. Don’t miss this great opportunity; your tortoise will thank you. September 26, 8 am – 3 pm, Desert Garden Center, 6221 W. Charleston (between Jones and Torrey Pines).

How Can I See inside That Burrow? by Kathy Utiger

Worry, worry, worry! Has my tortoise escaped? Is it trapped in the burrow? I haven’t seen my tortoise all week. Is it okay? How we tortoise owners worry about our little loved ones, and all because we can’t see what they are doing. And as we know from experience, most of the time our tortoise is in its burrow and just doesn’t feel like coming out. Maybe it’s too hot, like it has been recently, and the tortoise is staying in where it’s cool, or perhaps it came out at night to sleep and went back in without your having seen it. Only the tortoise knows. If only we could see in there!

This year I have taken The Snooper to several homes to look down tortoise burrows. In all but two cases, I didn’t need The Snooper at all. I used two methods. First, I whipped my handy little mirror out of my pocket and shined the reflected sunlight down the burrow. In three cases I could see the tortoise right away. If I couldn’t see the tortoise, I gently slid a piece of PVC pipe down the burrow a bit at a time. Then I’d stop and listen for movement. In one case, that stirred up the tortoise enough that it moved around and we could see it. The combination of movement in the burrow and light from the mirror often stirs the tortoise’s curiosity to come and check on what’s happening—much to the relief of the worried owners. That’s just what happened in the other cases— they strolled out. So far, all tortoises are accounted for.

What can you do? Learn to use that fabulous tool, the mirror. The September meeting will feature a workshop on how to use a mirror to see into the burrow. All participants will receive a free mirror and Information Sheet #28, Using a Small Mirror to See into a Burrow.
Behaviors change throughout the year. The artificially rich environment that you provide may be responsible for very different responses from your tortoises than one would find in the wild tortoises.

Renewed Activity
Suddenly, despite the continued high daytime temperatures tortoises are becoming active to the point of pacing the edges of the property, checking places in the yard where they have not been for weeks or months, appetites are up, and there may be some social interaction. All ages and both sexes are very apt to do all or some of the above at this time of year.

Chin Glands
You may notice that the chin glands of males are enlarged as testosterone levels in the blood increase, typical of the season. Females may stay in their burrows to avoid the advances of males, or not. From what I have observed in the wild, tortoises may travel beyond their usual haunts and spend time in other burrows (wild tortoises will have several). Tortoises may decide to use one of these burrow during brumation (winter sleep).

Males Fighting
Males may encounter other males and they may joust with their gular horns or shove or bite at the snout, and forelegs. One may flip over the other male. All these actions are just what you have seen when a male is courting a female, usually with the exception of not trying to tip her over. This fighting between males may end in one tortoise attempting to leave and being chased by the other or flipping him over. If you are still keeping two fighting males, please think seriously of giving up one of them. Their fighting is promoting continual stress which is not fair, even inhumane.

Rain
If it rains during the tortoises’ active season, wild tortoises aren’t likely to miss a chance to drink, but your pet tortoise may not come out when it rains because it is sufficiently hydrated from water having been available all the time in the water dish.

Change in Diet
Come fall we are often confounded by the plants our tortoise will or will not eat. My dead grass is a favorite and, or course, roses. The tufted evening primroses ignored all season have suddenly disappeared. Tortoises, unlike us, respond to bodily needs. Your tortoise knows what he needs.
Fall Meeting Schedule

Nevada State Museum
700 Twin Lakes Drive
LV 89107 (in Lorenzi Park)

September 19, Saturday, 1 – 3 pm

Workshop on Using a Mirror to Look Inside a Tortoise Burrow; Demonstration on Weighing, Measuring, and Handling Your Tortoise; Tortoise Trivia Game; Annual Meeting; AND Ice Cream Sundaes for all!!

Learn to use a mirror to see inside your tortoise burrow. Free mirror for each participant. Don’t miss this one! It’s going to be a whole lot of fun!

October 17, Saturday, 10 am - noon

Field Trip to the Springs Preserve
333 S Valley View
LV 89117 (east of the Meadows Mall)

Park your car and meet at the entrance to the Springs Preserve. No fee to Tortoise Group members.

Dr. Raymond Saumure will lead a tour of the 20-acre site of the proposed desert tortoise habitat. Dr. Saumure is a wildlife biologist who oversees all native wildlife related issues at the Springs Preserve, as well as consulting with staff zoologists on the live animal exhibits in the Origen Experience. He will give us a special look at things-to-come for desert tortoises.

Correction on Black Widow Spider Tortoise Tip

I sent out a Tortoise Tip telling folks that black widow spiders are timid, easily frightened creatures that live peacefully inside burrows with tortoises. They hoard their venom and use it only in life-threatening situations. I also stated that the spiders would not harm tortoises. Ray Ashton of Ashton Biodiversity Research & Preservation Institute Inc. in Florida sent the following correction: “There is no indication that the spider would not attempt to bite a tortoise if in fact the tortoise got the spider caught say between the neck and front leg. We cannot find any data on the venom’s impact on a tortoise or any other reptiles.”

Thank you, Ray.

Kathy Utiger
MegaDiet Satellite Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment
Nellis & Owens
Decatur & Gowan
Cheyenne & Durango
215 & Far Hills
215 & W. Tropicana
Rainbow & Alta
Dean Martin & Blue Diamond
Tropicana & Maryland
Eastern & Windmill
Silverado Ranch & S. Maryland Pkwy
Boulder Hwy & Equestrian (Henderson)
Warm Springs & Lake Mead (Henderson)
Boulder City
Pahrump
Kingman, AZ

Georgi – 459-1274
Toni – 277-6179
Susann – 205-7576
Kathy & Pauline – 804-0472, 9am – 7pm
Athens – 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

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.

Henderson’s Best Kept Secret
Henderson Bird Viewing Sanctuary, located within the Water Treatment Facility, sits on approximately 140 acres near the intersection of Sunset and Boulder Highway. Address is 2400 B Moser Drive, phone 267-4180. Open every day 6 am - 3 pm, no charge. If you need binoculars they will hold your car keys “in trade.” At least 260 species of birds have been viewed there. http://www.cityofhenderson.com/parks/parks/bird_preserve.php

MegaDiet Sellers Needed
• Camino al Norte &Ann Rd.
• Charleston and Rancho
Call Betty at 739-8043 for more info.

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
Moving?

If either you or your tortoise is moving, we’d like to know. Send email and physical address changes to kutiger@embarqmail.com.

Thank you to Amy Levitus of Avant Garde Design for her continued support in the layout of our newsletter. www.agdesignlv.com

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

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