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DESERT CONTROVERSY
THE DESERT TORTOISE CONSERVATION CENTER
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE TORTOISES?

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President’s Message

2013 has been a great year for our society. We have successfully rescued, rehabilitated and adopted more than 500 turtles and tortoises.

Thanks to our sponsors and donors, we have provided medical care for hundreds of animals and improved the housing needs at our foster homes.

I am excited about the new online store we are about to launch on our website, which will feature new turtle and tortoise products, including T-Shirts, books, and food for our animals.

We really need your help in volunteering for events that get our message out to the public. There are many other volunteer opportunities, including local street fairs, schools, and other community organizations.

It’s never too early to begin getting ready for our July show. If you have plants or turtle or tortoise items to donate, ideas for new things at the show, or something else you have seen online or at a store, we want to hear from you.

We also want to know what we can do for you. Give me a call if you have any suggestions for speakers, new events we can attend, group outings, or other activities. You can reach me anytime at 760.738.8865 or email President@sdturtle.org.

We are also looking for new board members and committee members. Call me for details.

Happy Holiday to you and your family!

Ginny Stigen
SDTTS President
Cover Story: Desert Controversy
The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center

The Desert Tortoise Center in Las Vegas Nevada is facing budgetary problems and the Federal Government has decided to close it by the end of 2014. The coming closure has sparked national media attention as there are conflicting reports on the animals and the numbers to be euthanized.

There are reports that healthy animals will be released, but it is debated if many of the tortoises are healthy enough for this, so most may be euthanized. See the following in the Huffington Post, http://www.buffingtonpost.com/2013/08/25/desert-tortoise_n_3813133.html for further perspective.

Defenders.org has a petition you can send to the Interior Secretary to help make your voice heard: https://secure.defenders.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&pa ge=UserAction&id=264.


Following are two articles on the center, and what it does and a response to the controversy by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

Ruin or Recovery:
Loss of the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center will have Adverse Impacts to Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery

By Dr Allyson Walsh, Associate Director
Applied Animal Ecology, San Diego Zoo
Institute for Conservation Research. awalsh@sandiegozoo.org

The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) was constructed in the early 1990s within a 11,014-acre area set aside as the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center Management Area by the BLM’s Las Vegas Resource Management Plan. A primary function of the DTCC was as a holding facility for formerly wild tortoises removed from the path of development and unwanted pet tortoises. In 2009, San Diego Zoo Global was contracted by USFWS to transform operations of the center to play a critical role in supporting range-wide recovery efforts for the desert tortoise through conservation research, on-the-ground recovery actions, training and public education. We have made significant progress in standardizing the health assessment of tortoises, offering training courses to renewable energy biologists, and in furthering our understanding of disease and translocation ecology thru experimental population augmentations. Just as we are starting to impact recovery, we are faced with funding shortfalls and are being forced to shut down at the end of 2014. Our future vision remains to promote conservation of the desert tortoise and Mojave Desert ecosystem by providing a first-class facility for research, training, and public education.

There are currently approximately 1,100 tortoises at the DTCC. The staff at the Center evaluates each tortoise to determine species (not all of the tortoises brought to the center are the desert tortoise species native to North America), body condition and health. Most of these tortoises are either healthy or are rehabilitated to healthy status, at which point they are released to the wild as part of a joint USFWS-SDZG recovery-driven effort to supplement declining populations. A small number are placed into adoption programs. Sometimes euthanasia of unhealthy pet tortoises is necessary for humane reasons, but only after we evaluate other options. All healthy
Pet tortoises surrendered to the Center are often in poor condition, leading to a higher prevalence of a disease known as Upper Respiratory Tract Disease (URTD). This disease also exists in animals in the wild. One of the reasons that some of the animals received by the DTCC will not be good release candidates is that they are in poor health, not so much because they have disease agents that are not found in wild populations. Upper Respiratory Tract Disease causes pneumonia-like symptoms with varying severity, from a persistent runny nose to wheezy breathing, lethargy, and encrusted/sealed eyes. In some cases these clinical signs can be temporarily relieved with antibiotics. An important part of what the DTCC is doing is examining necropsy results to identify the internal effects of this disease, evaluating clinical treatments, and studying disease ecology. Our research indicates it is inhumane to release tortoises with severe URTD symptoms into the wild (and dangerous to healthy animals in the wild) or rehome them with inexperienced handlers. We have currently adopted out all of our healthy animals and do not need any additional offers of assistance. Mojave Desert Tortoises cannot be moved across the state border from Nevada into California.

The Center is currently following a systematic shutdown plan under the direction of the USFWS, with closure scheduled at the end of December 2014. Whether or not closure occurs depends on the Federal government finding an alternative source of funding and is a question for USFWS.

The question San Diego Zoo Global can answer is what will be lost if the center is closed?

First, several ongoing research projects on disease, one of the key factors that led to the listing of the Mojave desert tortoise as threatened, will be terminated. The capacity for future research on disease or other conservation issues in a controlled setting will be lost. Second, augmentations of wild populations using carefully screened pet tortoises or their progeny will be discontinued. Opportunities to use these tortoises and translocation to determine factors affecting recovery in the wild and to boost population numbers will be lost. Third, alternative training sites, other captive animals and instructors will need to be identified to train biologists conducting range-wide monitoring. Training of private biologists to conduct health assessments for renewable energy-related translocation projects will be discontinued. Renewable energy projects will have to rely on the existing population of trained and qualified biologists to conduct health assessments or alternatives to translocation (or developing projects in tortoise habitat) will need to be identified. Finally, the use and capacity of the DTCC for public education in the greater Las Vegas/Clark County area will be lost. Just over seventy percent of Nevada’s residents live in Clark County (US Census Bureau).

San Diego Zoo Global’s vision for the future role of the Center in range-wide desert tortoise recovery continues well beyond 2014. Recovery of the desert tortoise in the wild has eluded the Federal government for over 25 years. Offering the assistance of our applied scientific skills, experience and abilities to achieve recovery objectives continues to be our top priority. While many recovery and research actions are possible without the existence of a physical center (just like teaching children is possible without a school), we remain hopeful and supportive of the concept for a broader trans-border Mojave Desert Conservation Center to focus multi-state work towards desert species recovery. Set in era of escalating solar energy development across the Mojave and Colorado deserts, conservation philosophy is being smart from the start.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s statement on the status of the desert tortoises at the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center in Nevada:

Recent media reports regarding the status of desert tortoises at the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) have implied that the FWS is currently euthanizing desert tortoises at the facility. We want the public to know that the FWS is not euthanizing healthy tortoises.

The DTCC was established in 1990 to receive wild tortoises in harm’s way from development and has taken in unwanted pets since 1996. Over 1,000 tortoises arrived at the DTCC each year, and approximately 98 percent of those are surrendered or stray pets. Science-based protocols developed for desert tortoises brought to the DTCC have been instrumental in helping the FWS maintain a healthy population of desert tortoise in the wild. Managing to recover desert tortoise, a threatened species, is a complex task in which all options need to be considered, and all risks and benefits to the species must be assessed.

Many pet tortoises, unfortunately, are diseased or otherwise in poor health, and run the risk of spreading disease to wild tortoises. These tortoises cannot be relocated to the wild, or otherwise contribute to recovery of the desert tortoise
Cover Story: Desert Controversy (Continued)

The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center

population. Sometimes euthanasia of unhealthy pet tortoises is necessary, but only as last resort, and only after we evaluate other options. All healthy tortoises at the DTCC will be relocated to sites that will support the recovery of the species.

Progress is being made on translocating the healthy DTCC tortoise population to the wild. A Programmatic Environmental Assessment is complete, and tortoises are already being translocated by the FWS to an approved site in Trout Canyon, Nevada. Public scoping for a second translocation plan was completed Aug 22, 2013, for a proposed translocation area south of Coyote Springs, Nevada.

Chelonian Upper Respiratory Tract Disease

Tortoise Upper Respiratory Tract Disease and why it is important that we support the staff at the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center

by Jess Gonynor-McGuire, PhD

There has been quite a bit of chatter about the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) and their tortoises. I think it would be helpful for people to research what the DTCC does on a daily basis. Their blog, Zoo Blogs (http://blogs.sandiegozoo.org/tag/san-diego-zoos-desert-tortoise-conservation-center), would probably be a great place to start. Not only are they housing displaced tortoises, they are also trying to address critical research needs, which range from animal behavior to disease ecology.

I feel compelled to get some of this information out there in hopes of helping the public understand what is going on. I am writing from my experience with the gopher tortoise, and I am in no way affiliated with the DTCC. I have, however, spent some time in the desert, and I have interacted with the staff a number of times and have seen their work presented at scientific conferences.

So what? The tortoises just have a “cold”!

This is not as simple as some are making it sound. The primary disease we generally associate with our North American tortoises is Mycoplasma-induced Upper Respiratory Tract Disease (URTD). However, there are a suite of other pathogens that might be impacting health and causing clinical disease, including herpes, ranavirus, and fungal infections (the list goes on!). My research experience is with the gopher tortoise (Gopherus polyphemus), a species in the southeastern United States. However, the effects of the disease are similar to those in the desert tortoise.

External clinical signs, include, but are not limited to, nasal exudate (clear to thick mucus, i.e., runny noses); weeping, red swollen eyes; encrusted or sealed eyes; labored, wheezy breathing; lethargy, etc. Some tortoises get runny noses so often that the moisture actually scars their nares and erodes the skin. Tortoises with chronic, weepy eyes might even get white rings around the eyes over time. Therefore, it is inhumane to release these tortoises into the wild (and dangerous to healthy animals in the wild) or place them in captivity with inexperienced handlers.

The signs we can’t see are the internal effects of disease. An important part of what the DTCC is doing is documenting these effects. Tortoises that experience recurrent clinical disease may have increased lung tissue scarring over time, resulting in a decrease in lung function. In my experience with gopher tortoises (Gopherus polyphemus) with URTD, infected individuals are emaciated and have minimal fat tissue; this reduced fat might make it difficult for tortoises to get through colder months and could decrease fitness. The nasal cavity is often scarred and eroded, which might decrease their sense of smell. We also find mineral deposits, such as bladder stones, which might create a blockage. There are still many things that we don’t know about these diseases or even how findings from necropsy relate to health. I am sure there are a number of pathgens still left to discover!
Voice of the Turtle

Cover Story: Desert Controversy (Continued)

The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center

Why can't they just release all of the tortoises? Why are they being so strict about who can adopt?

My next point pertains to releasing pets. The origins of many tortoises in captivity are unknown (are they collected from the wild? Bred in captivity?). There are hypotheses out there that some of the disease we are seeing in our native tortoises (such as the desert tortoise and gopher tortoise) is due to exotic tortoises being released into the wild; however, this hasn’t been proven. For example, our native tortoises may have been exposed to new pathogens from other countries through imported animals. That being said, how many times do we hear reports of a tortoise or turtle that has escaped from the yard? I constantly get calls about exotic tortoises found out and about. There is no telling what conditions these escapees were kept in or what pathogens they were exposed to in captivity. It is not uncommon for people to keep different species of chelonians together. This poses a real threat to our free-ranging chelonians should pets be released.

The amphibian decline due to the chyrrid fungus, Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis, comes to mind. I am not going to go into ranavirus or herpes, both of which are growing concerns, especially for box turtles (Terrapene carolina). There is currently no cure for URTD. With the help of an experienced veterinarian, the clinical signs from a bacterial infection (such as from Mycoplasma spp.) can be alleviated, but the tortoises will usually get sick again in the future. This kind of care might be reasonable for a responsible pet owner, but will not be possible for tortoises that are released in the wild.

When the DTCC is reporting that a tortoise is sick, I have every confidence that they have done the best that they could to evaluate the fitness of the individual for release. The people at the DTCC are passionate and love the tortoises.

URTD is not much different than pneumonia* in humans. Similarly in humans, the severity of the disease can vary among individuals. This ability to recover *Editor's note: Pneumonia in humans is associated with Mycoplasma pneumoniae, while URTD in tortoises is associated with Mycoplasma agassizii. This symptom can vary due to age, stress, history, co-infection with other unknown pathogens, etc.

What is so concerning about URTD, particularly in free-ranging animals, is that we still know so little. The DTCC is on a mission to answer some of the remaining questions. URTD can be as simple as a pesky, lingering “cold” for some tortoises, or it can lead to death. In fact, tortoises might suffer with severe clinical disease for months before dying: envision an emaciated, nearly blind, runny-nose tortoise wandering around. It’s disturbing, and it is inhumane to release this tortoise into the wild. Imagine the other animals this tortoise might come across in its aimless, disoriented wandering!

There are a number of things that we need to do to help the plight of our North American tortoises. We need to educate the public about the effects of taking tortoises out of the wild. We also need to encourage people not to release pets into the wild under any circumstances.

There are networks of organizations out there that will take these pets, and we need to make the list of organizations easily available. If you are a local organization that will take unwanted pets, is your local animal officer aware of this? Is your state wildlife agency aware of your specialization with reptiles? (Be sure to have the proper permits). We need to spread the word that unless the exact location where the animal was found is available, it should not be released, especially in cases of tortoises with signs of illness. This decision should rest with the state agencies. We need to act responsibly, and, although the outcome might be sad for the individual, our objective should be to protect the species.

I hope this provides clarity regarding the issues of disease and releasing tortoises. This is a complex problem that needs attention. For more information, please visit the Southeastern Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Disease Task Team web site to learn more about disease: SEPARC (http://www.separc.org/products/diseases-and-parasites-of-herpetofauna).

For more information about the gopher tortoise, visit the Gopher Tortoise Council main page: <http://www.gophertortoise.org/>.

The Desert Tortoise Council also has a web site that can be found at <http://www.deserttortoise.org/>.

Disclaimers: I am in no way affiliated with the DTCC, but I am familiar with their work. I have been researching URTD in the gopher tortoise, but not in the desert tortoise. The opinions expressed in this blog are my personal opinions and observations.

Jess Gonynor - McGuire, PhD
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Follow-up reading associated with the reprint of this blog post can be found at the following web site: https://sites.google.com/site/jlgonynorHome/chelonian-urtd.

This blog was originally published on the Gopher Tortoise Health Working Group web site (https://sites.google.com/site/jlgonynor/Home/chelonian-urtd) and is reprinted with permission from the author.

This is the first in a series of health-related articles that will focus on the diseases that are affecting wild and captive populations of chelonians.

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Halloween Tortoise Style!!
Designing and Constructing Your Own Stream

By Ken Taylor
I’ve had quite a few types of turtles over the years, but my favorite is the box turtle. They are one of the cleaner turtles to keep and relatively easy to feed. Also, they seem to have their own unique personalities.

Their pens are pretty easy to make as you just need a wall high enough that they cannot climb over, several places for them to hide and sleep and water for them to drink and soak in. Since I spend most of my time in my backyard watching over my box turtles, I decided to make them a small stream. This gives them cleaner running water that they can drink and bathe in and it seems as though they spend more time in this stream than they did in their paint roller tray that I used to use for their water dish. Also, all of these parts can be purchased at a local home depot store.

The first thing that is needed is enough space where you can dig out a ditch where there is enough width and depth for a decent stream. The depth should only be at most 6”. Also try to find an area where the start of the stream is higher than the end point. Make sure the perimeter of this stream is raised so it is above ground level by about an inch. The end of this stream will have to be deeper (about a foot) as you will need some type of hydroponic style pot to house a pump. Then cover this ditch with pond liner. You could also use a “water course” which has a connection for a tube and makes a great source for this stream. A tube can be connected to this water course and lead to the pump at the end of this stream. A very small and weak submersible pump should work just fine for this purpose. I use a pump that moves about 150 gallons an hour. The pump should be surrounded by carbon filters which will both clean the water before entering the pump and prevent dirt or other debris from clogging it. I buried the power cable for the pump just a few inches below the dirt leading out of the pen to make the stream look as natural as possible.

I used a material called “Rock on a Roll” which is a flexible rock type material and safe for aquatic animals to cover the pond liner. This isn’t necessary, but I preferred the look of this material. After that, I used pebble rock in the stream over the liner to keep the depth at a level where the box turtles can bathe and drink, but still get in and out without problems. I also used some flat stones from a local dry riverbed to decorate around the stream.

Now the stream functions as it should and the turtles really seem to like wading through the water. I have found that putting a few water lettuce plants in the stream helps reduce the amount of algae that will develop during the summer months.
Hi! My name is Joseph with the Technicolor dream coat, “Joe-Joe to my friends.” They call me that because someone painted my shell all different colors. The paint keeps the sun from my shell so it doesn’t grow right. I am an African Spurred Tortoise, Geochelone sulcata (Sulcata for short). I weigh approximately 24 pounds. When fully grown, I could weigh between 140 and 200 pounds. I was found several months ago at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. I have no memory of how or when I arrived there. I do remember how uncomfortable I was. I could hardly use my back legs, and it was very painful.

A lady came and picked me up and another lady took me home with her. She noticed right away that I couldn’t use my back legs. I had to pull my body along by just using my front legs. The next morning I found myself at the Rancho San Diego Veterinary Clinic. The vet drew some of my blood and took some x-rays. She checked me thoroughly inside and out. My vet’s name is Dr. Marisa McNeil. She took very good care of me. My foster mom picked me up, and my vet told her my back legs were very infected. She found tar imbedded in both legs. She said she knew I was in a lot of pain. My foster mom took me home. She had to give me shots, pain medication and frequent soakings. The shots were very uncomfortable for me as she had to give them to me in my front legs. The shots lasted almost two months. Finally the vet said the infection had cleared up, but I should keep taking the pain medication. I have a lot of trouble walking. My foster mom calls it my pirate’s gate. I can’t keep up with the other tortoises in the yard; my back legs just give out.

My foster mom has to soak me in water so I don’t get stones or blockages in my tummy. I hate baths. I do everything I can to get out of the tub, but she just picks me up and puts me right back in. I am doing real well now. I still see Dr. McNeil every so often. Now I only have to take the pain medication every three days. I love being with people and other tortoises. Sometimes the other tortoises turn me upside down, and my foster mom has to come and rescue me.

My house is a very large dog house with heat in it and lots of hay to keep me warm and cozy. I am hoping to find a forever home - that special someone that wants a tortoise as special as me. I will spend the holidays at my foster home. I have to be off my medications before I can be adopted. I am looking forward to that being very soon.

Your Friend,
Joe-Joe
Update on Cherchy from Alaska

When I was around five years old, 20 years ago, my family adopted a California Desert Tortoise from The Living Desert in Palm Desert. Sherman has been my friend for the last 20 years. He is not as personable as I would like though and he hibernates a fair amount of time. I had heard about how Sulcatas are very approachable and living on a half-acre lot, I knew space would not be a problem. After coming to the San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society’s event for the last five years, I knew that there a fair amount of Sulcatas that needed homes.

When I was ready, I approached the San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society, and I was put in touch with Caretaker Julie. When I arrived at Julie’s to adopt a tortoise, I was instantly drawn to Cherchy. He was larger than I was planning on adopting, but once she told me his story about his owner bringing him all the way from Alaska for a better life, I knew it was the right match. I also liked that he was used to having one-on-one interactions with humans, as he lived good amount of time literally in Peggy’s house during the cold months.

I am in the process of getting my Education Specialist Credential, Special Needs Teacher, and looking forward to having Cherchy help with children’s interaction with animals. Cherchy has already been fed from neighborhood children’s hands. I am always careful to make sure children do not get their hands too close to his mouth, but he seems to really enjoy the attention. Cherchy will be a great help in the classroom. Children truly enjoy him and his personality, and he seems to enjoy their attention as well.

His previous owner, Peggy, keeps in contact with me so I give her updates on how he is doing.

Kevin
In the big pond in Balboa Park, I noticed there are at least one or two turtles, red ear sliders.

Being an owner of a couple of cute ones, I did notice that there is no safe place for them to bask, like an island or a piece of wood or something in the middle of the pond. A friend of mine told me that today one was out on the edge of the pond (near the public) basking and people were throwing grass and stuff at it.

I know how much my turtles love and need to be in the sun and I am wondering if anyone has spoken to whoever is in charge of those ponds to make sure that the habitat is conducive for the survival and growth of that/those turtles.

If not, can it be addressed, or I could contact them if I knew who to contact.

Thank you,
Susan, from San Diego

Dear Susan,

Thank you for contacting us about the ponds in Balboa Park. The San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society is part of the San Diego Botanical Foundation and we hold meetings there monthly.

We are contacted all the time when turtles are in the ponds. The management tries to catch them and calls us to pick them up. The turtles do have plenty to eat and do well in the ponds, so there is no harm of them being in there. You are correct that there really isn’t any place for them to get out of the water.

Thank you,
SDTTS Care Consultant

My name is Nessa Franco and I am the Hospital Administrator at Windan’S Sea Veterinary Clinic in La Jolla. Today we found a tortoise in a paper bag with a note taped to its back stating that the owner could not take care of it and that they believed it had a stroke. Our doctors do not treat exotics, and we want to make sure this kid gets the care it needs. I am aware of the work you all do and I am hoping that you have someone that can come get the tortoise and get it the care it needs and deserves. There is a shell abnormality so we are having difficulty identifying this little one. Thank you in advance

Sincere Regards,
Nessa

Dear Nessa,

This call was critical so her email was returned within minutes and followed up by a phone call. She was picked up by Rich Rinde the following morning.

The San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society is taking in animals from local shelters, veterinarians & citizens who are finding them throughout San Diego. We work with all organizations to make sure every turtle and tortoise is taken in and a secure foster home is provided.

Care Consultant for SDTTS

Good Morning,

I am writing today to ask your organization if you can help me find a better home for Mertle, my Sulcata tortoise. This tortoise was born around Sept 1, 2013, and was found in a squirrel trap in a co-worker’s backyard. My co-worker has two of his own Sulcatas but didn’t realize they were of the opposite sex. I have done my research on Sulcatas and have given him/her a good home but know it could be better, as I have started traveling more and can’t take Mertle with me every time as it is too much in the car I think. I look down on people who get a pet and then give them away. I hate that I have to do this, I really do. Please write back at your earliest convenience to help me find a GREAT home for Mertle.

Nicole

Dear Nicole,

Thank you for writing to us. I agree that Mertle won’t like traveling very long with you as they require a heated environment during the winter months and it would be a struggle for both of you.

We are happy to help you, just give us a call and we will make arrangements to take him.

SDTTS Care Consultant

Please send in your caretaker questions by email to
info@sdturtle.org
or if you wish to remain anonymous, you can mail it to

SDTTS
PO BOX 712514
SANTEE, CA 92072-2514.
A big “thank you” for our member support of generous donations that enabled us to replace the heated houses located at our foster home in El Cajon. Julie houses between 10 to 20 of our African Sulcatas.

These 2 new custom, 6 foot, insulated heated houses have our new design for easy access to the top. They are on their own thermostat that keeps the temperature consistent.

Thank you for your financial support that allows us to provide housing for these large African Sulcatas

ATTENTION MEMBERS: We need your current e-mail address!

The Society is able to save a substantial amount of money by using email to contact members and announce special events and monthly speakers. Nearly 50% of our member list does not have an email address, so to keep in touch it is taking funds to pay for postage.

We want to keep the money working for the care and welfare of the animals, so if you have not been receiving our monthly emails this year, please help us out and send in your email address.

You can mail it in, bring it to the meeting, or go to www.sdturtle.org as there is a green bar across the first page of our website that says “Add your name to our contact list” and you can enter it there.

Thank you.
By Ginny Stigen

What a great group of kids from the Escondido High School Key Club. They volunteered their time for a community service project, at the foster home of Ginny Stigen, Association President in Escondido. They assisted in a make over of the enclosures for the Desert Tortoises and African Sulcatas that are in foster care.

Under the direction of Patrick, Julie and Ginny, the enclosures were raked and seeded. New Mallow plants were added to the enclosures along with cactus giving them a new exciting look and some great food for the tortoises.

The kids enjoyed their interactions with the tortoises, feeding them, petting them and taking photos. We all ate sloppy joe’s and enjoyed the day.

A Big Thank you to the kids of Escondido High School Key Club!!
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**Please note our exciting new, updated membership Options:**

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Membership fees are tax deductible in the year paid and include our bi-monthly Voice of the Turtle (VOTT) newsletter.

The date listed after your name on your address label is the month/year that your SDTTS membership expires. When the date on the address label is prefaced by “EXPD” it means your membership has expired and it is your last VOTT issue. We will also send you a postcard when it is time to renew. Please renew promptly.

It is your responsibility to inform us when your address changes. VOTT issues that are returned as undeliverable cost the Society $2.60 each in postage.

Are you tired of paying your membership each year...Why not renew for two or more years. Just indicate that information on your check. Or better yet, consider becoming a lifetime member and never pay membership dues again.

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For membership questions:
Please Contact Gail Smith
webmaster@sdturtle.org

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Join us at our monthly meetings in the Casa Del Prado, Room 101 in Balboa Park.
For an up-to-date schedule of events, directions and a map please visit www.sdturtle.org.

**SDTTS Editorial Policy**

The views expressed in the Voice of the Turtle represent the article’s contributors and do not necessarily reflect the Society’s views. The editor reserves the right to shorten articles at her discretion. Submission of an article or photo does not constitute a guarantee of publication due to newsletter space limitations.

**SDTTS Care Sheets**

Visit www.sdturtle.org and download care sheets on:
Desert Tortoise, Water Turtle, Box Turtle, Russian Tortoise, African Spurred Tortoise, Plants that Poison, Hibernation, The Importance of Sunlight, & Desert Tortoise Bladder Stones FAQ’s
2013 Calendar of Events to Remember

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 10, 2014</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting – 7pm Balboa Park - <strong>Matt Thomas</strong>, new owner of Pet Kingdom and former employee of the San Diego Zoo, on Keeping Larger Breeds of Tortoises</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 14, 2014</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting – 7pm Balboa Park - <strong>Elections &amp; Love Your Tortoise Day</strong> (food supplies etc. on hand to buy for your special turtle or tortoise)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 14, 2014</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting – 7pm Balboa Park - <strong>Dr. Thomas Boyer</strong> on “Importance of Nutrition”</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11, 2014</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting – 7pm Balboa Park - <strong>Post Hibernation</strong></td>
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<td>May 9, 2014</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting – 7pm Balboa Park - <strong>Speaker TBD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 13, 2014</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting – 7pm Balboa Park - <strong>Speaker TBD &amp; Sign-Up for Show Volunteers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 26-27, 2014</td>
<td><strong>SDTTS Annual Show</strong>, Saturday 10am – 5pm and Sunday 10am – 4pm</td>
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