

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. was founded in 1974 to protect the desert tortoise by acquiring and protecting its habitat and by educating the public.

The Committee's first goal was to protect tortoise populations in the Natural area by a boundary fence. This goal was achieved in 1979 when the fence was completed around most of the perimeter. The hogwire fence was raised 10-12 inches off the ground to permit movement of wildlife. However, in the last few years, the fence was extended to the ground in a few areas to protect tortoises from heavy vehicle use adjacent to the fence.

When the Desert Tortoise Natural Area was established in 1974, 14 of the 39.5 square miles of habitat were in private ownership and had to be acquired. Since that time, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Bureau of Land Management, and California Department of Fish and Game have acquired about 12 square miles, leaving about 20 small, private parcels to be acquired. Acquisition of these private lands remains a priority for the Committee. Acquisition of these private parcels is a high priority and, when accomplished, will complete land acquisition for the first Desert Tortoise Reserve Natural Area in the Southwestern United States. The Committee has also acquired significant holdings of critical habitat for the desert tortoise in other areas of the Mojave and Colorado deserts.

An Interpretive Center was erected by the Bureau of Land Management. This structure is located at the entrance to the Natural Area, in the southeast corner, 5 miles from California City Boulevard on the Mojave-Randsburg Road. The Interpretive Center, with kiosk containing descriptive panels, shelter and benches, was dedicated in April of 1980. Self-guiding nature trails are available. A naturalist is present during spring months for education and interpretation of flowers and wildlife. The Committee conducts guided tours here for schools, museums and other groups in spring, after the tortoises emerge from hibernation.



Since its inception in 1974, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee continues to be supported by thousands of individuals, several conservation organizations, wildlife groups, scientists, and government agencies.

We invite you or your organization to support our work by making a tax-deductible donation, becoming an active or contributing member. Membership includes the quarterly newsletter "TORTOISE TRACKS."

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS ARE:

\$ 20.00	Individual
\$ 30.00	Family
\$ 50.00	Sponsor
\$ 75.00	Benefactor
\$100.00	Patron/Corporate
\$500.00	Life

Please make checks payable to DTPC and mail to:



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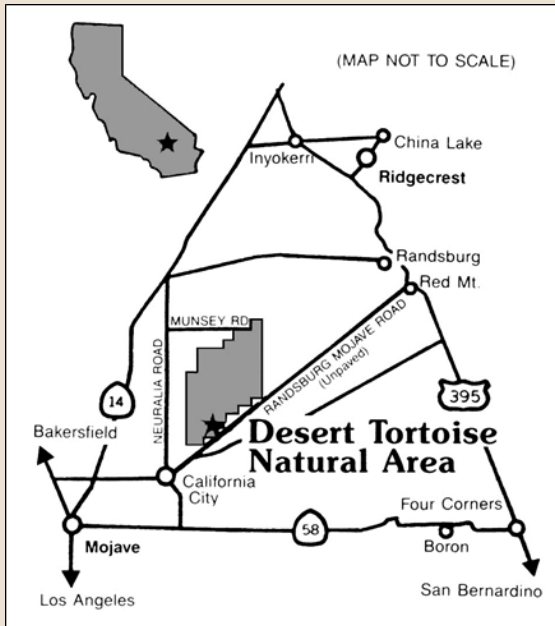
Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area



Visiting the DTRNA

Location

The Desert Tortoise Natural Area lies in the western Mojave Desert. Located in the Fremont Valley and western slopes of the Rand Mountains in southeastern Kern County, it is 5.5 miles northeast of California City — a two-hour drive north from Los Angeles and one and a half hour drive east from Bakersfield.



Wildlife in the Natural Area

This 39.5 square mile area of prime natural habitat has the finest known populations of the threatened desert tortoise, the official California State Reptile. In 1980, the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Interior, designated the Desert Tortoise Natural Area as a “Research Natural Area” and an “Area of Critical Environmental Concern.



In addition to the tortoise, populations of the State-listed threatened Mohave ground squirrel are present, as well as the protected desert kit fox, jackrabbit, coyote, badger, desert woodrat, and kangaroo rat. Lizards present are the collared lizard, side-blotched lizard, leopard lizard, chuckwalla, and the western whiptail. Examples of birds to be seen are the cactus wren, LeConte’s thrasher, ash-throated flycatcher, red-tailed hawk, and ladderback woodpecker. Snakes common to the area are coachwhip, gopher, sidewinder and Mojave rattlesnake.

DO NOT RELEASE CAPTIVE TORTOISES!!!

It is illegal to release captive tortoises or relocate wild tortoises from other areas of the desert to the Natural Area. Captive tortoises are highly likely to carry infectious diseases easily transmitted to the Natural Area population. Also, pets have different genetics and their behaviors are likely to negatively affect the Natural Area’s wild population.

Wildlife is best observed in the spring months during cool morning hours. Some species are most abundant during years when there are carpets of wildflowers as a result of a wet winter. There are over 200 different kinds of plants: desert candles, Mojave asters, primroses, blazing stars, coreopsis, lupines, phacelias, thistle sage and gillias, to name a few. Among the flowering shrubs, the creosote bush is conspicuous for its height and abundance, and essential for providing shelter for wildlife.



The Threatened Desert Tortoise

Within the desert’s fragile ecosystem, tortoise populations are rapidly diminishing: in some places they have disappeared. Losses are due to vandalism, raven predation, disease, collections for pets, and habitat degradation. Habitat has been lost or damaged from mining, livestock grazing, development of desert lands for cities, agriculture, roads and utility corridors, vehicle-oriented recreation, military uses, and renewable energy.

Tortoise populations grow slowly because of their low reproductive potential. Females do not breed until they are 15 to 20 years old. They lay small clutches of eggs when forage is poor and when the female is small and young. Also, hatchling survival is low because juveniles are eaten by many predators, including the Common Raven.



Luckily, the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area is protected from many of the activities that initially threatened the desert tortoise. The fencing prevents unauthorized sheep grazing and entry by recreational vehicles. Because of historical protection, the Natural Area now has between 4 and 6 times the densities of tortoises and much lower mortality rates than outside the fenced boundaries on private and public lands.