
Tortoise Tracks

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Summer 2011 31:2

A Small but Significant Find

Barstow Woolly Sunflower discovered at the DTRNA
Article and Photos by Denise LaBerteaux

Talk about being at the right place at the right time! On April 5 of this year, Pat Seamont and I set out to begin the first of five plant transects at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. This work was being conducted for the USGS on one of Dr. Kristin Berry's projects. I was navigating out to the transect located in the southern portion of Section 2 and was a bit off-course. My less than direct route took us directly to a small population of Barstow woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum mohavense*) in the northeastern portion of Section 11. Plants were in full bloom. I knew immediately its identity, having surveyed for this species on several projects in the West Mojave. Populations are known from the vicinity of Barstow to a few miles east of Mojave and from Cuddeback Dry Lake to the Red Buttes.

The Barstow woolly sunflower is a California endemic and is a CNPS List 1B plant, a plant that is rare, threatened, or endangered in California. It occupies desert chenopod scrub, Mojavean desert scrub, and desert playas, occurring mostly in open, silty or sandy areas, barren ridges, or margins of playas between 1640 ft and 2952 ft in elevation.

We found 30-40 plants on a gentle, south-facing slope. They occurred on an undisturbed, shrubless patch of coarse gravel and pebbles within a



creosote - white bur-sage scrub habitat. The soil particles were somewhat cemented together. Other annuals growing with the Barstow woolly sunflower included red-stemmed filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), winged-nutted combseed (*Pectocarya heterocarpa*), Fremont gold (*Syntrichopappus fremontii*), and Mediterranean schismus (*Schismus barbatus*).

We did a quick search of the immediate area, snapped a few photos, GPS'ed the site, made a small collection, and then continued with our main objective for the day, conducting plant transects. That evening I emailed Dr. Berry about my find. She was very excited and made plans to come out to search additional areas for this plant.

On April 14 (a fabulous day, about 68 to 70 degrees, and NO WIND), Laura Stockton and Clyde Golden (CNPS) joined Kristin Berry, Ashley Emerson, and Heather Schneider (USGS) in searching for additional sites for the woolly sunflower. They walked north along the eastern section line of Section 11 almost to the ridge, then west to look at my site of initial discovery. Kristin found another site uphill of my site. Laura and Clyde left then (about 2:00 p.m.), and Kristin, Ashley and Heather continued to look and found another five sites to the west, north, and south. All sites

(Continued on page 2)



Habitat

(Continued from page 1)

were in similar habitat, associated with rises on low hills, and were in very small areas devoid of shrubs or where live or dead shrubs were scarce and where the ground was covered with small rocks about 0.5 to 2 inches in length. The topographic map indicates the sites were between 2940 and 2960 ft. Kristin also made a very small collection after they had found additional sites.

On April 20, Kristin and Mary Kotschwar (new DTPC Preserve Manager) went to search again for additional sites. First, they re-visited one of the previous sites and the plants were still there, further along, and drying. The day grew cold and very windy. They covered the north-east portion of Section 11 and the southern 1/2th of the SE1/4 of Section 2, drifting a bit into Section 1, finding zero. Absolutely zero new sites with 5.5 hrs of search effort. The soil types for all 7 sites (including the initial site) were about the same; the annuals were similar to identical and the locations were very close to one another. There were other similar sites, drier in appearance, with nothing.

We will prepare the appropriate forms with photos and will discuss sending the voucher specimens to Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and preparing records to send to the California Natural Diversity Database.



Denise in the field.

Calendar of Events

June 11: DTPC/BLM Coordination Meeting, Ridgecrest, CA.

June 12: DTPC Board Meeting, Ridgecrest, CA.

October 15: Fall Work Party. Details for this event will be posted soon.

January 2012: Annual Meeting and Banquet. Details for this event will be posted soon.

More information for each event can be found by calling (951) 683-3872 or sending an email to dtpc@pacbell.net. Additional information can be found on the DTPC's website www.tortoise-tracks.org and Facebook www.facebook.com/dtpc.inc.

Special thanks to the following:

Dr. Kristin Berry
 Laura Stockton
 Chuck Hemingway
 Jun Lee
 Denise LaBerteaux
 Charlie Massieon
 Laura Mogg
 Chris Herbst
 Tim and Chris DeBolt
 Jeanne Murrin
 Pat Sorensen
 David Logan
 Jane McEwan
 Mark Bratton
 Dave Zantiny
 Steve and Marlene Ishii



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Spring Work Party, March 19, 2011

Article by: *Mary Kotschwar*

On March 19, 2011, a group of dedicated volunteers met at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, ready to contribute their time and labor at the DTPC Spring Work Party. This year, we returned to “Camp C,” the DTPC-owned parcels just east of the DTRNA that have been the site of habitat restoration efforts since 2007. The 31.72 acre area was severely impacted by off-road vehicle use before it was acquired in 2005 and fenced in 2007. Since that time, biologists, volunteers, and restoration crews from the Student Con-

servation Association and the American Conservation Experience, have installed vertical and horizontal mulches and catchments to decompact the soil and create microclimates for enhanced seed germination and plant growth. This year’s efforts focused on adding mulches, with one



Newly constructed vertical mulch, designed to promote the growth of new vegetation, as well as rodent activity to decompact the soil.

crew collecting dead creosote limbs and another digging holes and constructing the mulches. Other volunteers marked, mapped, and photographed pre-existing mulches and catchments for a restoration effectiveness monitoring program. Despite the cold front that moved in in the early afternoon, it was a very productive day. The group installed 23 new vertical mulches and 16 new horizontal mulches. The marked and mapped sites greatly facilitated monitoring activities, which took place in April.



The Spring Work Party Crew

Many thanks to Carrie Woods (BLM Ridgecrest Field Office), Aaron Bitterman, Mark Bratton, Chuck Hemingway, Chris Herbst, David Logan, Jane McEwan, Bob Parker, Pat Sorensen, Laura Stockton, Valerie Welling, and Dave Zantiny.

Photo by Laura Stockton

Spring Wildflower Hike with Dr. Kristin Berry

Article by *Jane McEwan*

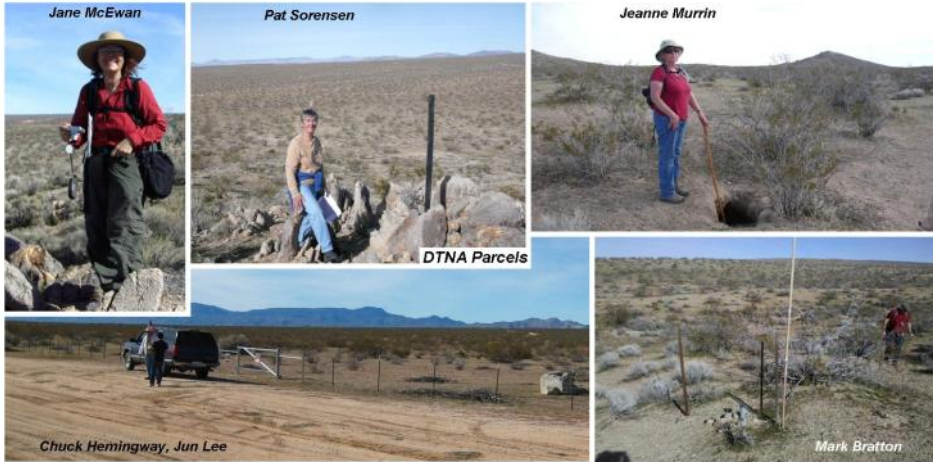


The spring wildflower hike at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area on April 2nd was a delight. Three long-timer tortoises stole the show from the transient annuals, which was as it should be; although the wildflowers also caught our attention. Dr. Kristin Berry introduced the group to several reference books to help identify wildflowers and encouraged beginners to learn two or three species each time they visit the desert. Dr. Berry also handed out a list of DTRNA Flora that she and Denise LaBerteaux compiled of over 267 plant species. The species vary from north to south, as well as east to west, with the varied terrain of the DTRNA. Dr. Berry updated the list to include the new nomenclature used in the upcoming revised Jepson Manual (<http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/jepsonmanual/review>). Several of us joked that learning a new language is recommended for keeping the brain sharp. Puzzling out a new-to-you species, either by comparing it with the photographs in field

guides or by keying it out as you gain expertise in plant identification, can be an enjoyable and life long challenge. Learning how to recognize the features common to particular plant families makes indentifying the variety of annuals and shrubs much more manageable. This approach helps recognize "old friends" and allows you to get to know new plants which may look similar to the ones you already know. Field guides organized by plant families, rather than by color, make it easier to learn the distinctions sooner. The best advice is to start with what inspires you. This may be a field guide with gorgeous photographs, or better yet, just getting out and looking! So come out to the DTRNA and join us, anytime.



DTPC Land Activities



DTRNA/California City Parcels.

On Saturday January 15th, 2011, a group of 8 DTPC volunteers performed baseline inspections for 20 new DTPC parcels. The newly-acquired land totals just under 800 acres, and includes various parcels within the existing DTRNA area and various parcels in the surrounding area. While minor disturbance exists for the parcels within the DTRNA, the parcels in the surrounding area will require significant cleanup and restoration work.

Pilot Knob and Harper Lake Rd.

On Saturday April 9th, 2011, 5 volunteers accompanied Mary Kotschwar to perform an annual inspection of the Pilot Knob holding (east of Cuddeback Lake) and the Harper Lake Rd. tortoise fencing. Good weather and blooming wild flowers made for a nice day. At Pilot Knob, the main gate to the Blackwater Well area had been taken off its hinges. Although slightly bent, the gate was re-hung and secured. At Harper Lake Rd., while the tortoise fencing is holding up well, a section of approximately 50 feet was badly damaged. Repairs took place in May.



James G. Clune Land Donation

On December 2010, the DTPC received a generous donation of a land located in California City from the Estate of James G. Clune valued at \$25,000. The vacant parcel consists of 10,648 square feet and is zoned for residential development. The DTPC will hold this parcel and pursue either exchange or sale opportunities to raise funds for future acquisitions within the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area.

Patricia M. Bauer, the daughter of the donor and Trustee of her father's trust, explained that "my father, James G Clune, loved to visit many places all over the United States with my mom Marjorie in their RV. My mother passed away in January 2007, and my father in May of this year. My memory of the property in California City in the Mojave desert was during the process of buying the land. We went on a heli-

copter ride to look at the land, which was pretty exciting for all of us. He was pleased with the purchase, but unfortunately was never able to make any improvements on the land. Because of his love of travel and nature, I am sure he would be pleased that I am donating the land to preserve the desert tortoise."

"Land donations are much appreciated because they will ultimately help fund the Preserve Committee's high-impact programs such as acquiring in-holdings inside and adjacent to the DTRNA, land stewardship efforts, and environmental education," said Jun Y. Lee, the DTPC's land acquisition coordinator. "It was a great pleasure to work with Patricia Bauer in concluding this land donation," he said, "as it was clear that she was quite dedicated to ensuring a lasting legacy for her father."

Environmental Updates

Hundreds of Scientists Denounce Congress' Attempt to Undermine Endangered Species Act

WASHINGTON (March 30, 2011) – Nearly 1,300 scientists today urged senators to oppose efforts to undermine the scientific authority of the Endangered Species Act, which they fear would threaten the long-term survival of all species protected by the law.

The letter, signed by 1,293 scientists with expertise in biology, ecology and other relevant disciplines, urges senators to block any legislation that would compromise the scientific foundation of the law. The Senate is now considering its version of the House's Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2011 (H.R. 1), which includes language that would take the gray wolf off the endangered species list. The lone rider on the Senate version contains similar language.

If Congress passed the continuing resolution with the gray wolf provision, it would be the first

time a species was delisted without the benefit of scientific analysis, establishing a precedent for Congress to delist other species without scientific review.

“The consequences of this action would extend far beyond the survival of one particular species,” said Franz Camenzind, a Wyoming-based wildlife ecologist who signed the letter. “If any one species is taken off the endangered species list by Congress, then all of the species on the list become vulnerable to future political attacks. This would send the implementation of the Endangered Species Act into chaos, creating uncertainty both for species and for the communities and businesses around them.”

To read the entire article, visit: http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/scientists-denounce-congress-endangered-esa-0526.html

Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Eagle Mountain Landfill Case, Helps Protect Joshua Tree National Park

BACKGROUND: The Supreme Court announced that it will not hear an appeal from Kaiser Ventures LLC on a 2009 U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision, overturning the land exchange necessary for the development of what would be the world's largest garbage dump on the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park.

STATEMENT BY: David Lamfrom, California Desert Program Manager

STATEMENT: “The Supreme Court’s decision not to hear this appeal is great news for all of us who care about Joshua Tree National Park.”

“Joshua Tree, which is celebrating its 75th Anniversary this year, is an American icon. Local communities, regional economies, and more than 1 million visitors per year all benefit from the wildflower blooms, abundant wildlife, Joshua tree woodlands, and rock formations that have made this national park world-famous.”

“Putting the country’s largest landfill next to one of its most revered landscapes is contrary to America’s collective work and investment to protect this national park for our shared enjoyment and inspiration-and to ensure that those who follow us can do the same.”

“Depositing 20,000 tons of trash per day next to Joshua Tree National Park will hurt the air quality, water quality, scenery, and natural quiet of the park and its southern gateway communities. It would also increase the population of ravens - a major predator of the federally threatened desert tortoise.”

“Courageous activists have worked for years to protect their communities from this project, and hundreds of thousands of park supporters have commented against the Eagle Mountain Landfill. The people have spoken, and they want Joshua Tree National Park to be protected.”

For background information, visit:

<http://www.npca.org/pacific/desert/threats/eaglemountaindump.pdf>

Feds Announce Reviews for 250 Imperiled Species

BILLINGS, MONT. (May 10, 2011) - The Obama administration Tuesday announced a deal with environmentalists to work through a backlog of more than 250 imperiled animals and plants and decide which merit greater protections.

Most are expected to be listed as threatened or endangered if a federal judge approves the agreement, Interior Department officials said. The species to be reviewed range from the Pacific walrus and North American wolverine, to 110 plants and 38 kinds of mollusks.

That could lay the groundwork for a spate of future conflicts over industrial development, water management and residential expansion wherever humans are encroaching into the natural world.

Conservation groups and government agencies in some cases already are working to prevent such disputes, hoping to avoid a repeat of the bitter fights that emerged over protections for the northern spotted owl, gray wolf and snail darter.

Some of the plants and animals in the announcement were first proposed for protection soon after the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973. Instead, they languished for decades on a list of

"candidate species" that the government could not afford to help.

Final decisions would be due by September 2016. It would settle pending litigation between the Interior Department and Denver-based WildEarth Guardians.

WildEarth is among a handful of groups that have filed hundreds of legal actions against the agency, hoping to force it to make it extend protections to species including the greater sage grouse and Canada lynx.

Those are in a long list of fish, birds, mammals, plants and even snails that scientists already have determined need greater protections to avoid extinction.

Deputy Interior Secretary David Hayes said the backlog has been made worse by lawsuits that have distracted the Fish and Wildlife Service from needed scientific reviews and restoration work.

"This plan will enable the endangered species program to function as it was originally intended," Hayes said. "Priorities are being set by plaintiffs in courts, instead of by wildlife professionals.

To read the entire article, visit: <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/world/51789133-68/species-endangered-protections-interior.html.csp>

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All contributors receive the quarterly newsletter *Tortoise Tracks*.

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Introducing the DTPC Board...



Jane McEwan Board of Trustees, President

Serving on the Board of Trustees for the DTPC is a way for me to share my lifelong love for the Mojave Desert. I grew up on the Naval base at China Lake, where the annual spring wildflower show was a big event at our community center. I have fond

memories of my best friend Margaret's mother, Tina Knemeyer, hand coloring line drawings in a book of desert wildflowers, of the desert tortoises in their backyard, next to ours; and of watching horned lizards eating ants in the alley between our houses. I recall walking to school past fields of Desert Dandelions and of boys bringing Chuckwallas and iguanas to school. Happily, I still see Desert Dandelions and Iguanas when I walk from my law office to the Post Office, across a "vacant" lot covered with Atriplex bushes. The fragrance of Atriplex after a rainstorm takes me back in an instance to playing in the desert behind our house. I am a fan of Atriplex and need to start a movement to preserve them here in Ridgecrest. As a native Californian myself, I resent the influx of Texas Rangers replacing Atriplex around town. Atriplex are unsung heroes, providing shelter for those iguanas and food for the larva of Blues, exquisite tiny butterflies.

Attending the University of California at Riverside (back when that was an affordable option for anyone) and obtaining a degree in Environmental Sciences increased my appreciation for the diversity of ecosystems, native plants and wildlife in California. I went on to get a law degree from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. While in law school, I worked for the Environmental Protection Agency and for the Department of Justice, Division of Lands. After graduating, I had a private practice in Anchorage, Alaska, before moving to Hawaii and then later to Nevada, Oregon and Washington. I have lived in many places and enjoyed getting to know many ecosystems, but none of them outshine the desert and the biodiversity here.

When I first moved back, I was very lucky to land a job as coordinator for the Sand Canyon Environmental Education Program, where I got to work with our community's "living treasures:" volunteers who shared their love of wildflowers, birds, reptiles and the desert itself. One was Mary Ann Henry, one of the founders of our wildflower show who became an expert botanist. Her activism also helped protect the California Desert. One of the things Mary Ann did, was compile a list of the flora of Short Canyon in the Sierra, the western boundary of our valley and of the Mojave (http://www.kerncnps.org/PlantLists/short_canyon.html). Naomi Fraga has added to that work, compiling a longer list of the flora of the Owens Peak watershed (<http://anabaena.net/OP.php>). The diversity here is outstanding and the number of unique, endemic species is remarkable. I mention Naomi Fraga here, although I haven't met her, because she has also learned from another expert botanist who I taught me when I was at U. C. Riverside, Oscar F. Clarke. Oscar established and ran the herbarium, led the best botany/natural history field trips, and gave me a foundation for a lifelong interest in botany. What he taught me about plant families and plant identification has given me more enjoyment than anything else I learned there. I am excited to find he has published a book on the flora of the Santa Ana River (<http://newsroom.ucr.edu/1565>). Although I am a generalist, not an expert, I hope what I do as President of the DTPC will continue the good work of these botanists inspiring others to appreciate and protect the diversity of California's ecosystems.

Mark Bratton

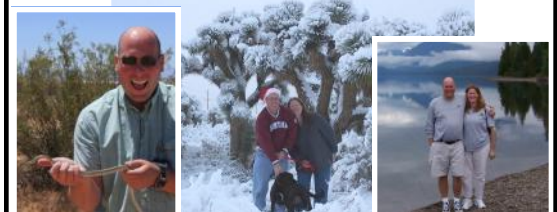
Board of Trustees, Vice President



A son of a science teacher, Mark Bratton grew up in Troy, Michigan. As a child he was always fascinated with the world of nature. Even when he was young he enjoyed turtles

and tortoises. In fact his first pet was an Eastern Box Turtle named "Sammy". As a teenager he loved camping and hiking with Boy Scouts and spending time in the outdoors with family and friends. After graduating high school Mark attended the University of Montana and earned a B.A. in Environmental Biology. After college, he landed his first biology job at Edwards Air Force Base (AFB) as an entry level biologist. Fifteen years later Mark is now the Lead Biologist for CH2MHill at Edwards. His field of expertise at Edwards is working with the federally threatened desert tortoise. He and his wife have several pets, including two desert tortoises Claire and Boomer.

Mark Bratton joined the Board of Trustees in 2008. What first attracted him to the Board is the multitude of good work they have done for the desert tortoise over the years. They have acquired and protected habitat, funded research, and provided education. The importance of this cause keeps Mark energized and enthusiastically committed. Currently Mark is the Vice President of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and he is also in charge of supervising the board's only employee Mary Kotschwar, the Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator for the DTPC. He is also on several sub committees with the DTPC.





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