



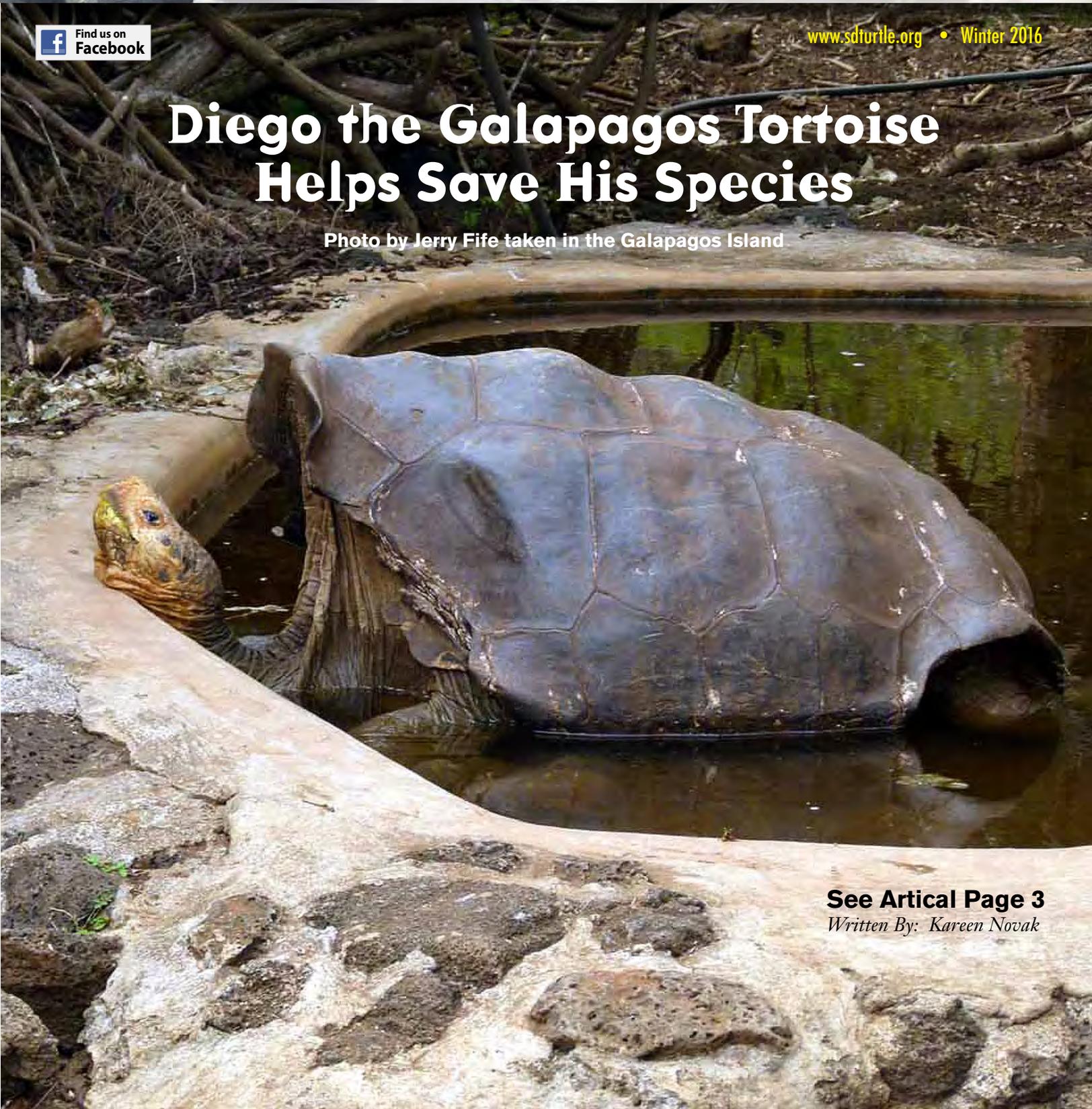
# Voice of the Turtle

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## Diego the Galapagos Tortoise Helps Save His Species

Photo by Jerry Fife taken in the Galapagos Island



**See Article Page 3**  
*Written By: Kareen Novak*

## VOICE OF THE TURTLE

www.sdturtle.org

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**All others:** Ginny Stigen (760) 738-8865

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

**Webmaster:** Gail Smith webmaster@sdturtle.org  
**Membership:** Harley Wallace membership@sdturtle.org

### NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Kareen Novak (858) 692-3016  
Christy Carlson (858) 997-7338

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## “Where does the money go that you donate to the SDTTS?”

*from your board of directors*

**E**ach and every day we receive calls and emails from people in distress who have a turtle or tortoise with a life threatening injury. Just this week, Ginny picked up a turtle that was found in Temecula that had been run over by a car. The poor little turtle had bad cracks through both the top and bottom of his shell, and was rushed to our vet. Sadly, he had a broken spine and had to be put down. The following day, we received a call from the owner of an 80 lb. African Sulcata, whose shell had been severely cracked after being run over by a neighbor's car. Dennis went to their home and helped load the tortoise into a truck so that the owner could immediately rush the animal to the vet.

While some of us rescue and care for these animals, Kim Thomas drives weekly to several shelters and picks up the turtles and tortoises they have in their possession. Kim also goes to homeowner's association ponds that have become overcrowded with turtles. He traps some of the turtles and we then place them in private ponds, where they thrive. Kim and Becky take care of over 500 water turtles a year!

We take in all turtles and tortoises that are found or surrendered by the public. We also take in animals from humane societies, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and our local vets. Some of these animals need immediate medical attention and we work closely with local vets to provide the best possible care for orphaned turtles and tortoises. We then continue to provide rehabilitation for these animals until they are ready for adoption.

In addition to turtle and tortoise rescue work, we provide education to the public through our monthly meetings and newsletter, and we provide care consulting through our website and phone calls.

The SDTTS is an all-volunteer organization and we rely on our members and member support in order to continue to do this important work. Without all of you, we would not be able to continue on. We have been incorporated since 1971 and look forward to many more years to come, thanks to the wonderful support of all of you!

# Diego the Galapagos Tortoise Helps Save His Species

*Written By: Kareen Novak*

Diego the Giant Galapagos tortoise is over 100 years old, but his sex life is still going strong! It is estimated that he has fathered around 800 offspring since 1976, and he shows no signs of stopping his amorous ways anytime soon. What makes the feat even more noteworthy, is that Diego's subspecies, *Chelonoidis hoodensis*, was almost extinct in the wild before they set up a captive breeding program on the Galapagos Islands in 1965.

The fate of the Giant Galapagos tortoises is closely linked to the history of the islands themselves. The Galapagos Islands are an archipelago of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean, about 620 miles west of Ecuador. There are 18 main islands, and Galapagos tortoises were originally found on 9 of them. The islands were made famous by Charles Darwin, who explored them during the voyage of *The Beagle* in 1835. Darwin used his observations of the wildlife there, including the giant tortoises, to help develop his theories of evolution.



The Galapagos Islands were discovered in 1535 by accident, but were not populated until the early 1800's, when whaling ships started stopping there for supplies and rest. At that time the giant tortoises were hunted for food and also for their fat content. Sailors discovered that the giant animals could survive without food or water for up to a year, and that led to the tortoises being brought on board ships and kept alive until needed for fresh meat. This practice accelerated the decimation of the species. The introduction of nonnative species to the islands also contributed to population decline. Rats, pigs, dogs and a type of voracious ant all preyed on tortoise eggs and young hatchlings. Goats and donkeys caused habitat destruction and also competed with the tortoises for food. As a result of all of these factors, it is estimated that between 100,00 and 200,000 tortoises were lost over a two century period.

In 1959, the Galapagos National Park and the Charles Darwin Foundation were established. At that time a review of tortoise populations on each island was conducted. There had originally been 14 distinct giant tortoise populations, but only 11 remained, and most of these were either endangered or close to extinction. In 1965, a breeding program for the tortoises was started on Santa Cruz Island. It was hoped that by bringing breeding tortoises to the protected center, the hatchlings could be allowed to get large enough to be "predator-proof" before being reintroduced to their respective island homes.

This brings us back to Diego, and his spectacular contribution to the giant tortoise breeding program! Diego's subspecies was restricted to Espanola Island, where only 14 tortoises remained in 1959—2 males and 12 females. All of these animals were brought back to the Santa Cruz Island breeding center, but Diego was not among them. He was yet to be found! Because of the small number of tortoises remaining of this subspecies, an international search began for other potential breeding partners. Diego was found right here in southern California at the San Diego Zoo.

*Continued on page 7*

## Mulberry: *Morus* species



Leaves and fruit of *Morus alba* (white mulberry). Photo © 2007 by Andre Abrahami. Source: Creative Commons, license CC-BY-SA-2.5.

Depending on the authority consulted, there are anywhere from 10 to 16 species of mulberry worldwide. Mulberry species, members of the genus *Morus*, hybridize freely, adding to the potential for confusion. Mulberry trees belong to the Moraceae family, commonly known as the mulberry or fig family.

Most mulberry species are native to the Asian subcontinent, but became naturalized in Europe and elsewhere centuries ago. American colonists introduced white mulberry, *M. alba*, which is native to China, to America for silkworm culture in the early colonial times. After its introduction, *M. alba* naturalized in the environment. Additionally, it hybridized freely with the American native *M. rubra* (red mulberry) (Mulberry, n.d.).

Several species of mulberry are commonly grown in California, according to California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc. These are *Morus alba* (white mulberry), *Morus nigra*, (black Mulberry), *Morus rubra* (red, or American mulberry) (Mulberry, n.d.). Hybrids between *M. alba* and *M. rubra* occur naturally. Plant breeders develop many cultivars (named varieties) for specific qualities such as fruit flavor or growth habit.

### Male and Female Trees

Mulberries are either monoecious or dioecious. Monoecious species bear both male and female flowers on the same tree, while dioecious species bear male flowers and female flowers on separate trees.

Female trees and monoecious species are the fruit-bearing members of the genus. Female trees bear inconspicuous flowers called catkins, which are slender, pendulous clusters of flowers. These catkins give rise to the mulberry fruit.

Male trees do not bear fruit, and are often called “fruitless” mulberries. Male trees do, however, produce flowers containing copious quantities of pollen that may induce allergy attacks in persons

with pollen allergies, and may even trigger asthma in susceptible individuals. Consequently, some communities in the United States have banned the planting of male mulberry trees.

### Leaves

Mulberries are deciduous trees, meaning they shed and regrow their leaves annually. Leaf color during the shedding process may range from muted yellow to bright yellow.

Mulberry leaves are relatively thin, and lobed or simple (unlobed) in shape. The leaf margin is blunt-toothed. The color of the leaves when the trees leaf out in spring is a light, bright green, and the leaves may vary considerably in both size and shape even on the same tree.

Mulberry leaves are edible and nutritious. Tortoises and other herbivorous reptiles readily accept mulberry leaves as part of their diet.

### Fruit

Female and monoecious mulberry trees bear fruit of various colors, ranging from white to pink to red to purple, depending on the species and the stage of maturity. In appearance, the mulberry fruit resembles the blackberry (the genus *Rubus*). The mulberry is not, botanically speaking, a true berry, but rather a collective fruit (Mulberry, n.d.).

Mulberry fruit is edible and juicy, and the *Sunset Western Garden Book* describes it as sweet “but rather insipid,” that is, flavorless (Brenzel, ed. 2012). Opinions differ on the best-tasting fruit, some saying *M. rubra*, red mulberry, which is native to the eastern and central United States, has better-flavored fruit, while others claim *M. nigra* (black mulberry), native to western Asia, tastes best. Moreover, many cultivars bear fruit that is superior in taste.

The fruit of the mulberry will stain hardscape (pavement, stepping-stones, etc.), as well as clothing and other fabrics with which it comes in contact. Accordingly, it

is unwise to plant fruit-bearing mulberry trees near walkways. The ripe mulberry fruit is very attractive to birds.

Adding mulberry **fruit** for your turtle's diet depends on the species of turtle. Box turtles and forest tortoises, for whom fruit is a part of the natural diet, should have no problem with a moderate amount of mulberry fruit. Conversely, arid-region grazing tortoises such as desert tortoises (*Gopherus* species) should **not** eat mulberry fruit due to its high sugar content.

### Mulberry culture

The mulberry tree needs full-sun exposure in order to thrive. Being a deep-rooted tree, it will not grow well in shallow soils. Once established, it is somewhat drought-tolerant, but looks best with regular watering. The tree is relatively wind-resistant, and it tolerates both pollution and a variety of soils.

White mulberry needs ample room to grow, as the upright form of the tree can reach a height of 15.24 meters (50 feet).

Mulberry trees are quite pest- and disease-resistant, although they can develop canker disease and dieback. Mulberries need a minimal amount of fertilizer. In California, mulberries usually need only nitrogen (Mulberry, n.d.).

### “Weeping” mulberry

There are commercially available *M. alba* cultivars with a pendant growth habit. Weeping forms have branches that grow down rather than up, making harvesting leaves (and fruit) much easier. Weeping forms typically grow to a mature height of about 3.7 meters (12 feet). **Ω**

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*Artical Credit to CTTC and M.A. Cohen*

# Desert Tortoise Baby born at SDTTS

*Photo and Article by Dennis Stephens*

**W**e here at SDTTS take in and adopt out hundreds of tortoises and while they are all special our desert tortoise work is a big part of what we do. Being a native and endangered species brings a special awe quality from the desert tortoises. If you haven't seen a desert tortoise in the wild it is quite the sight. They are big, intelligent, and can even withstand the extremes of Death Valley. A true survivor against all odds. The half moon burrows they create are a must in the desert

ecosystem playing home to snakes, lizards, birds, and desert mammals. Their survival in the wild affects so much more than just their species. A huge part of the desert relies on the desert tortoise to be free and able to do what they do.

Our adoption, fostering, and rescue efforts help raise awareness about these beautiful tortoises and all they mean to our southern California ecosystem. We take in numerous animals from the injured to the illegally acquired and while we cannot release the animals again we can ensure they have a home, care, and a quality life so that future generations can learn from them and hopefully save the species. We maintain our desert tortoises in individual pens for safety and to ensure breeding doesn't take place. While we take special precautions we occasionally receive females that are gravid. These females can lay eggs in the pen and months later we get a couple of new generation desert tortoises.

We recently had that very scenario play out. One of our females we took in managed to lay eggs in her enclosure without our knowledge. The other morning while feeding and watering we had a special gift in the pen. A bouncing baby tortoise (maybe more slow crawl than bounce). He/She was feeding and wandering around like a micro adult and weighed in at a whopping .8 ounces. Given the name "Freedom" this tortoise could grow to be an incredible ambassador for the species, and help to keep desert tortoise conservation going long after we are gone. Welcome to the world Freedom, and good luck!



## QUESTIONS ABOUT HIBERNATION?

**D**o you have questions or concerns about your turtle or tortoise's upcoming hibernation? Don't worry. You're not alone! Hibernation is a complex subject and even the experts don't fully understand it.

So to help you prepare and safely care for your turtle or tortoise during this time, we have several excel-

lent articles available on our website. First go to the SDTTS website, click on "Care Sheets" and then click on "Weather and Hibernation" at the bottom of the page. If these articles still don't answer all of your questions, you can email us at: [info@sdturtle.org](mailto:info@sdturtle.org)

# Ask the Care Consultant

## QUESTION:

Is it OK to feed bananas to my tortoise?

## ANSWER:

It is now generally agreed that excessive fruits are not good for desert tortoises. Bananas, in particular, should not be fed to baby tortoises as they sometimes choke on them, and they also cause their mineral metabolism to become unbalanced.

Bananas contain a lot of potassium and desert tortoises have difficulty processing and eliminating potassium because they have a very specialized water recycling system. Excess potassium (as well as other minerals such as chlorine, fluoride and calcium) can result in bladder stone formation, which can lead to a blocked urinary tract, renal failure or even death.

A healthy diet for tortoises should consist primarily of grasses, weeds, hay, and some flowers. The only fruit which they would naturally encounter in the wild would be the fruit of the prickly pear cactus (opuntia). Their diet has evolved over 80,000 years and so it is well adapted to their digestive system. They ferment their food slowly in their digestive tract in order to extract the maximum nutrition out of it. Feeding your tortoise a lot of watery fruits and vegetables can cause the food to pass through their system too quickly, resulting in lack of proper nutrition.

--Thank you to Don Williams of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club for this information.

NOTE: Small amounts of store-bought produce will not harm your tortoise, but this should be a small percentage of their overall diet. For more information about the proper diet for your particular turtle or tortoise, please check out the care sheets available on our website.

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## Diego the Galapagos Tortoise: *Continued from page 3*

It is believed that Diego was taken from Espanola Island by a scientific expedition between 1900 and 1959, and then taken to the San Diego Zoo, where he was well cared for and thrived. He was returned to the Galapagos in 1976, where he joined the two other males of his subspecies in the breeding program. He became the dominant male of the group and sired many hatchlings, but scientists didn't realize how important he was until six years ago. At that time a genetic study was done and it was discovered that he was the father of nearly 40 percent of the offspring that had been released back onto Espanola! Way to go Diego!

Diego may not be aware of his importance in saving his species from extinction, but I bet he's had a lot of fun doing it anyway!

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## National Pet Adoption Weekend

It was National Pet Adoption Weekend at PetSmart November 11-13. Several SDTTS members were at the Vista PetSmart store over the weekend to promote turtle and tortoise awareness and adoptions. Kim and Debbie Stone worked there on Saturday, and Terry and Billie Robinson (shown at right) worked Sunday.



# Using Solar Energy to Heat Your Tortoise House

Written by: Dennis Stephens

Southern California is an ideal place to raise tortoises. The weather stays very consistent with little rain and few freezes. Even in this reptile paradise, though, we have a couple of months when certain species that do not hibernate need help keeping warm during the cold nights. While this time is short, it can be very costly, especially if you keep a large collection of tortoises such as leopards, sulcatas, or red foots. Heat emitters or red heat bulbs, especially the higher watt varieties, drain energy and pocket books. Fortunately we can use our biggest resource—the sun—to help us save money, and more importantly our tortoises.

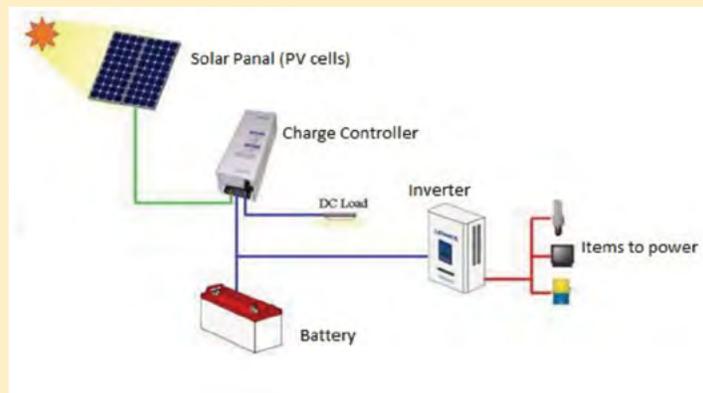
Using solar energy to keep our tortoise houses heated is very easy and cost effective. It is also an interesting way to teach about renewable resources for the future. So why doesn't everyone use solar energy to heat their enclosures, and power other areas? Most people don't understand how solar works. They get intimidated by the technical terms and don't realize it is easier to set up than they imagined. We will discuss some of the technical terms, and then get into a basic solar set-up for your tortoises or outdoor reptile enclosures.

What is solar, and how does it work? Solar energy is quite simply energy from the sun converted to electricity. We will not go into detail about how that works—just the basic information that we need. The sunlight hits photovoltaic cells (solar panels) and this creates direct current electricity or DC electricity. This is the same type of electricity produced from batteries. The solar panels therefore can be used to charge batteries. Most of the lights and heat emitters we use run on alternating current or AC power. For this reason, we need to convert the solar produced DC power to useable AC power. This is done with a power inverter. The solar charged DC batteries are attached to an inverter; the heat source is then plugged into the inverter

and ready for use. The following diagram illustrates this chain of power:

Now that we have discussed what solar is and how it works, we can talk about costs. While some kits can be very expensive (usually the on-grid home kits), there are basic kits that are easy to install and very affordable. The initial cost for supplies can run anywhere from \$80 up to \$500. These costs depend on how much power you need, how many systems you are powering, and the distance between them. For example, to heat one small tortoise house you would only need a basic kit, which includes a battery, solar panel, charge controller (this stops overcharging of the battery and distributes power in multiple set-ups), and an

inverter. This kit can cost as little as \$80. The more power you need, the more supplies you will need, such as bigger inverters, additional batteries, more solar panels, etc. These initial costs will be earned back by the savings on your electricity bill and through future uses.



Installing a solar kit can do much more than heat your tortoise enclosures in the winter. Summer can get hot, and saving water and electricity is just as important at this time. Your solar kit can now be converted to run water pumps, fans, cooling systems, and a myriad of other items. By running solar and utilizing timers, thermostats, and other automated systems, the savings can be much more than monetary. Saving time and labor is equally as important to some.

Solar energy can do so much for your pocket book! Plus it can save you time and energy, and it is a responsible way to power your passion for tortoise keeping. With these kinds of savings, more people can afford to keep tortoises comfortably, which can result in more adoptions and fosters, and fewer releases or relinquishments.

# IMMEDIATE FOSTER OR ADOPTION NEEDS

We rescue and foster hundreds of turtles and tortoises. Most are due to escapes, divorce, or the owners having to move. These tortoises are healthy and put up for adoption or long term holding. Occasionally we get turtles and tortoises that have special needs. These come from the humane society, incidences involving vehicle accidents, and those who cannot afford to care for sick animals. We take in all animals sick, injured, or needing a little extra help. These animals do require extra care and while we provide this care we have to also care for the hundreds of other animals. This stretches our resources thin. We are reaching out for those who want to make a difference, and give an amazing animal a comfortable foster or permanent home. They may need the extra attention, but the feeling brought on by helping these animals is a huge reward. Please open your hearts and homes and help foster or adopt a special needs turtle or tortoise. We have listed several animals that need homes. Read through the list, look at the photos, and please consider taking one in. Thank you, sincerely, from the SDTTS board members on behalf of these amazing animals.



## **CRASH:**

Crash the sulcata was brought to us after being hit by a car. The vets repaired his shell with fiberglass and treated his wounds. Crash is slow to get around now and can not soak for at least a month. He will need a nice quiet place he can relax, get attention, get help in and out of a heated house, and helped along his road to recovery. Crash is otherwise healthy, very outgoing, and is an inspiration with his drive and strength during such adversity.



## **ELVIS:**

Elvis the desert tortoise is a healthy, active, and very friendly tortoise. At first glance you cannot tell he has any special needs. Elvis has a funny walk where he uses his back knees more than his back feet. The best guess for this walk is that he was raised on a slick surface with improper diet. He eats great now, gets around with the best of the tortoises, and is a very healthy and happy tortoise. He needs a home that will be patient with him, keep his recovery going, and be willing to provide him a great home with a variety of quality food to help him further his progress. Elvis will make someone an amazing companion.



## **POPS:**

Pops is our old man! That is his special need. Pops is estimated at close to 80 years old. He needs a nice quiet place to retire and live the senior life. Pops eats, gets around, and loves people. Pops needs a good family willing to give him quality care during his golden years. Adopt Pops today and have a tortoise to lounge around with you on quiet lazy days.

# MEET YOUR BOARD

## DENNIS STEPHENS

Dennis, a proud born and raised Texan, grew up in the piney woods of east Texas in a small town called Cut-n-Shoot. He grew up catching reptiles and exploring the woods. His passion for reptiles grew and he knew he wanted to work with them. He joined the Marine Corps as a way to pay for school and travel. He served tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, and on down time in Iraq caught Uromastix lizards found basking on bunkers and sand bags.



After his contract with the Marine Corps he went home to Texas and started school at Texas A&M University in College Station. He studied biological, chemical, and genetic engineering. With his degree he came back to California to become an engineer for the DoD. He has worked on projects with various zoos, and institutions, working with reptile genetics, and domestication of species. He has also engineered and designed enclosures and created custom set ups for zoos, businesses, celebrities and athletes. Dennis has traveled to many countries helping with projects, studies, and relocations of animals. He has bred and studied various snakes, lizards, tortoises, geckos, and fish. Dennis has a beautiful daughter who is also in love with reptiles, especially her baby geckos and golden Greek tortoise! They have several tortoise species ranging from the common to the more exotic, and size ranges from ounces to several hundred pounds. His personal enclosures are a mix of naturalistic and engineered designs. They are powered by solar, wind, water, and utilize renewable resources and foods.

## NIKKI & ROBIN WOOD

Nikki was born and raised in San Diego, and is currently retired from SDG&E after working there 33 years. He is the father of 5 and grandfather of 15 children! He dedicates his life to helping others.

Robin has a professional background in construction and retail, but has a passion for helping animals. She is the founder of Camelids of California (camelids are members of the biological family Camedlidae, which includes, alpacas, llamas, camels and guanacos). She organized a resume of llamas and alpacas during the Witch Creek and Cedar fires, and she works with first responders to teach them how to capture, halter and understand these animals. Robin has also served as treasurer and membership chair for several equestrian organizations.



**Don't Miss our Holiday Potluck!**

**Friday, December 9**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, Room 104**

-- Invite your family and friends

-- Bring your favorite dish to share--appetizer, salad, side dish, dessert

-- Bring photos and stories about your favorite turtle/tortoise

**Drinks, rolls, condiments, and plates, napkins and utensils will be provided.**

# The Masked Bandits

*Written by: Christy Carlson*

There is no doubt that raccoons are the cutest masked bandits in the animal world, but they do live up to their bandit reputation. Raccoons are abundant in San Diego, especially in areas close to canyons. And while raccoons typically prefer fruits and nuts as their diet, they are foragers and will ransack anything they find to get a good meal. Most importantly to our home is the knowledge that they can kill young turtles and tortoises, and they absolutely will eat any eggs that have been laid.

California Fish and Game Code, Section 4180, allows for the trapping of raccoons if the raccoon is injuring property. While there are several deterrents that can be tried to keep raccoons from coming onto your property and injuring your tortoise or turtle, I've found most to be ineffective. Therefore, for the past several years we have trapped and released our bandit friends, in an effort to protect our younger tortoises, as well as ones that have special needs.

While you can hire companies to catch the raccoons for you, they typically catch and euthanize. Humane, catch-and-release traps are available at home improvement stores (Home Depot, Lowes, etc.) for a reasonable price. It took several times of trial and error to find a good bait and placement technique, but we finally did, and we have successfully trapped and released at least 8 raccoons over the last three years.

Research told us to use dog food (which did work sometimes), but we found good old fashioned Cracker Jacks did the trick every time. We placed the trap along the path that the raccoons used to travel to their feeding area (typically a fruit tree), and then sprinkled Cracker Jacks up, and into the trap. They typically would come out to feed in the early evening hours, most often just after dark. Setting the trap around dusk helped avoid having other critters such as birds find the bait and get trapped in the cage. It is very important, and legally required, that you check the trap every day. Since our traps were either in our front or back yard, we would hear the traps close shut, and go check immediately.



Since we released our raccoon friends back into the canyon, we always chose to do so in the early evening hour. When we couldn't release them the same night we caught them, we made sure we relocated the trapped animal to a cool, shady area. If possible, we would also place a water dish underneath the trap (we use a metal pie pan). That way the raccoon would not get overheated or dehydrated prior to being released.

Each time we did a release, I was nervous that the raccoon would turn and jump back at us. However, the moment we opened the trap latch, the animal always ran off into the canyon as fast as it possibly could. Usually we saw them scurry up the closest tree, which is their typical behavior for escaping predators. And while we can't be 100% certain, each of the raccoons we have caught and released, on face value looks significantly different than the previous catches. So we are fairly certain that the raccoons we caught have not returned, once they were relocated to the canyon area where food, water and shelter is abundant.

We hope you will find this information on successful catch-and-release trapping helpful, if you discover you have raccoons encroaching on your tortoise or turtle habitat.

# The Turtle Gazette

Bringing Turtle and Tortoise News, Locally and Around the World.

## Peru to Release 500,000 Baby Turtles into the Wild

A government-run conservation group in Peru is releasing 500,000 baby yellow-spotted Amazon River turtles into a protected part of Peru's Amazon River basin. The release is being done in 3 stages, between October and mid-November. The yellow-spotted river turtle is considered vulnerable and is on an international list of threatened species. The turtle eggs were collected by volunteers and government employees and then raised in specially constructed habitats. Once hatched, they are then let go into the wild, where they will hopefully help their species survive.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/baby-turtles-peru-amazon\\_us\\_58189452e4b0390e69d269ee](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/baby-turtles-peru-amazon_us_58189452e4b0390e69d269ee)

## How Hatching in Large Groups Helps Baby Sea Turtles Survive

A recent study by the Universidad Federal de Alagoas in Brazil and the University of Bristol in the UK has shed light on the question of why sea turtle hatchlings emerge simultaneously from their nests. The study was conducted on a remote island off the coast of Brazil, where green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) lay up to 3,600 nests per year. The researchers focused on 33 nests, checking them every half hour throughout the night. The yellow crab (*Johngarthia lagostoma*) is the main predator of baby turtles on the island and it was found that larger groups of hatchlings overwhelmed the number of crabs, allowing more individuals from that nest to make it to the sea. Another example of how working together is good for everyone!

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2016-07/uob-tph070416.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-07/uob-tph070416.php)

## Snapping Turtle Research Fast-tracked by Feds

In a settlement with the Center for Biological Diversity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to speed its review of the Alligator Snapping Turtle for consideration as an

endangered species. Recent surveys have shown that populations in Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee have likely disappeared. In all, the species is estimated to have seen declines as much as 95% across its native range, from the Midwest to Gulf Coast swamps in Texas, Louisiana and Florida. The agreement requires a determination of whether the species will gain protection under the Endangered Species Act by 2020. If granted, this would allocate federal funding for the survival of this iconic species.

[http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press\\_releases/2016/alligator-snapping-turtle-08-30-2016.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2016/alligator-snapping-turtle-08-30-2016.html)

## The Talk

As summer was coming to close, a runaway desert tortoise was found 6-1/2 miles from home. If the distance traveled wasn't enough, the estimated 100 year old Touché was found in a somewhat compromising situation. She had apparently found the companionship of a drainpipe cover that looked a bit like a tortoise. Touché's owner, Nancy Knauss of Fresno, CA., thinks that she fell in love with the cover. As winter settles in we can be somewhat assured that our turtles and tortoises will mostly behave themselves, but this does remind us that it is never too early to teach your kids about the facts of life, including how things might look from the perspective of a lonely turtle or tortoise! Fortunately, author Elaine Powers has put together a picture book entitled "I'm not a Turtle!" aimed at ending the confusion, at least about turtles and tortoises. While the book is intended for junior naturalists, it is appropriate for animal lovers of all ages. "I'm not a Turtle!" is available on Amazon in print and digital formats and don't forget to login with Amazon Smile to support SDTTS.

<http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2016/08/21/fresno-tortoise-runs-away-from-home-falls-in-love-with-drain-cover/>

## BioPond Out of Stasis

The University of Pennsylvania's BioPond is suffering a crisis that is unfortunately not unique. A non-native species, the red-eared slider, has been introduced through dumping and has proceeded to disrupt ecosystem. A university professor is calling for euthanasia of the invasive turtles, in order to return the BioPond to sustainable levels. Red-eared sliders are native to the south central United States, but their prevalence within the pet trade has spread the species well beyond its customary range. The specie's adaptability has allowed it to survive in a wide variety of environments, including places where it directly competes with native species. In the case of UPenn's BioPond, the painted turtle is being affected, but this is not an isolated issue. The Western Pond Turtle population in California has also been decimated by the red-eared slider, which outcompetes the native species for food. Biologists generally recommend eradication of the invasive species in order to protect the local, native ecosystem.

<http://www.thedp.com:8080/article/2016/09/invasive-turtle-species-in-biopond>  
<http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=11552>

## Bog Turtle in the Balance

The bog turtle (*Clemmys [Glyptemys] mühlenbergii*), a threatened species native to bogs along the eastern United States has received a bit of help through an \$850,000 federal grant awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the federal Endangered Species Act Grants Program. The state of New Jersey will use the grant to purchase lands to be dedicated as a wildlife preserve and to continue fighting invasive and non-native species that have impacted local flora necessary to maintaining the bog turtle's native range.

[http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/breaking/nj-gets-funds-for-bog-turtle-habitat/article\\_83bef3ba-81af-11e6-a8b7-ef3c278e4503.html](http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/breaking/nj-gets-funds-for-bog-turtle-habitat/article_83bef3ba-81af-11e6-a8b7-ef3c278e4503.html)

# Meeting Wrap-up

## SEPTEMBER:

Many thanks to Jerry Fife for the wonderful talk he gave at our September meeting. We had a great turnout of around 80 people!

Jerry is a well-known author and breeder of endangered species, such as Galapagos tortoises. He spoke about understanding the variations among leopard tortoises and shared some of his travel stories about searching for them in the wild. He also shared tips for owning and caring for large breed tortoises.

## OCTOBER:

We were privileged to have Lynsey Rosen, DVM, as our speaker at the October meeting of the SDTTS. Dr. Rosen is a veterinarian with the VCA Acacia Animal Hospital in Escondido. She has had specialty training in exotic animal medicine and loves working with turtles and tortoises, as well as other exotic species.

At the meeting, Dr. Rosen gave a very informative talk about how to prepare your turtle or tortoise for the coming winter months, including tips for successful hibernation. She also answered numerous questions from the audience about specific turtle and tortoise health issues, as well as general turtle care.

Thank you Dr. Rosen!



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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.

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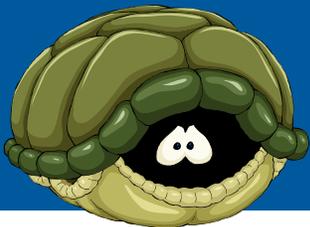
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**For membership questions:**

Please Contact Gail Smith  
[webmaster@sdturtle.org](mailto:webmaster@sdturtle.org)



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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](http://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, SDTTS.*



## 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 their discretion. Submission of an article or photo does not constitute a guarantee of publication due to newsletter space limitations.

**Join us at  
our monthly  
meetings**

in the

**Casa Del Prado, Room 101 at  
Balboa Park.**

**For an up-to-date schedule of  
events, directions and  
a map please visit**

*[www.sdturtle.org](http://www.sdturtle.org).*

## SDTTS Care Sheets

*Visit [www.sdturtle.org](http://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, etc.



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San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society  
**2017 Calendar of Events**

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- Friday, January 13, 7:00 p.m.** – Kim Lovich, Curator of Reptiles at San Diego Zoo Global.
- Friday, February 10, 7:00 p.m.** – Thomas Boyer, DVM, DABVP, of Pet Hospital of Penasquitos, and one of the most respected reptile veterinarians in the country.
- Friday, March 10, 7:00 p.m.** – Speaker to be announced.
- Saturday, April 15, 10:00-4:00** – Spring Show/Adoption Event.
- Friday, May 12, 7:00 p.m.** – Presentation on care of Box turtles, Russian tortoises and Desert tortoises, including info. on enclosures.
- Friday, June 16, 7:00 p.m.** – Jeff Lemm, Senior Research Coordinator in Behavioral Ecology for San Diego Zoo Global. Jeff is a herpetologist who works with native California reptiles and amphibians.
- Saturday & Sunday, July 22-23, 10:00-4:00** – Annual Turtle & Tortoise Show
- Friday, August 11, 7:00 p.m.** – Wrap-up of the show, panel discussion.
- Friday, September 8, 7:00 p.m.** – Dr. Jeffrey Lovich, Research Ecologist with Southwest Biological Science Center and noted author and expert on turtle species and subspecies.
- Friday, October 13, 7:00 p.m.** – Talk by one of our local vets about getting ready for hibernation and winter care.
- Friday, November 3, 7:00 p.m.** (Room 104) – Speaker to be announced.
- Friday, December 8, 7:00 p.m.** – Annual holiday potluck.

We are waiting for confirmation on two other very interesting speakers. Mr. Jerry Fife will talk about the Mediterranean tortoise group, and Mr. Tommy Owens from San Diego Zoo Global will talk about his work with Pacific pond turtles.

**NOTE: All events will be held in Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, Room 101, unless noted otherwise. Dates, times and speakers are subject to change, so please check the website: [www.sdturtle.org](http://www.sdturtle.org)**