

Key Desert Tortoise Facts

1.

Taken from:

http://banwaste.enviroweb.org/html/tortoise_fact_sheet.html

CRITICAL HABITAT FOR THE THREATENED DESERT TORTOISE OR NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP
by Philip M. Klasky

“In 1994, in response to a court order, the USFWS designated 6.4 million acres of critical habitat for the tortoise including Ward Valley.”

2.

Excerpt taken from www.tortoise-tracks.org/publications/berry2.html

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee

Proceedings: Conservation, Restoration, and Management of Tortoises and Turtles-An International Conference, pp. 430-440

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The Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan:
An Ambitious Effort to Conserve
Biodiversity in the Mojave and
Colorado Deserts of the United States

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Current Agency: U.S. Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division (same address)

“Drawing from concepts outlined in the federal Endangered Species Act, the recovery team used a strategy of protecting evolutionarily significant population units and their associated ecosystems. The six population units, called “recovery units,” were identified using published and unpublished data on genetic variability, morphology, and behavior patterns of populations as well as ecosystem types. Boundaries of the six units closely approximate major ecosystem boundaries in the Mojave and Colorado deserts. The goal is to reach a target (where possible) of 50,000 breeding adult tortoises for each recovery unit.”

3.

http://banwaste.enviroweb.org/html/stebbins_96.html

The Desert Tortoise by Robert Stebbins

“The threats to the tortoise, and wildlife nearly everywhere, are caused mainly by human activities dismemberment of habitats, species extinction, increasing pollution, and the spread of disease and pests. These human-caused threats to nature are also placing our own species at high risk.”

4. From Nature Serve Explorer www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=Gopherus+agassizii

Updated October 2006

Conservation Status:

Global Abundance: 10,000 to >1,000,000 individuals

Global Abundance Comments: Total population estimates range from 93,000 individuals (NDOW 1985) to several hundred thousand. However, the lower figure is too conservative. For example, on the 76,800-ha Ironwood Forest National Monument in Arizona, distance sampling methods produced an estimate of 17,997 tortoises (150 mm carapace length or larger) on the monument (Averill-Murray and Averill-Murray 2005).

Management Strategy:

Preserve Selection & Design Considerations: Major protection units (critical **habitat blocks** or Desert Wildlife Management Areas, DWMAs) should be **capable of supporting metapopulations of 50,000 adults**, according to some Minimum Viable Population (MVP) models (USFWS 1994). A population viability analysis by Brussard (1992) concluded that preserves or management areas should be large enough to **support 20,000 adults**. By genetic criteria alone a **minimal adult population would require 5,000 adults** (assuming an effective population size of 0.1 or 500) for continued viability (see Gilpin's model in USFWS 1994). (Emphasis Added)

Management Programs:

TNC has been active in acquiring and retiring grazing privileges on BLM-administered lands that include high-quality tortoise habitat.

See End. Sp. Tech. Bull., Sept./Dec. 1991, for information on BLM's proposed licensing of livestock use on public land in tortoise habitat in southern Nevada; one prescription (for 726,390 ha) restricts grazing from March 1 to June 14, in order to reduce trampling and forage competition, whereas the other prescription (for 557,085 ha) includes no seasonal restriction on grazing (**USFWS issued a no-jeopardy biological opinion**). (Emphasis added)

