

Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society

News Post for May, 2006

A Turtle and Tortoise Care Workshop

Presented by the Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society

May 21, 2006 2-4 P. M.

Houston Arboretum and Nature Center
4501 Woodway Dr. 77024 (713-681-8433)
www.houstonarboretum.org

The Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society (GCTTS) invites our members and the public to attend our next meeting which will be held at the Houston Arboretum as part of their Urban Nature Series:

<http://www.houstonarboretum.org/adultprograms.asp>

This open meeting will be a chance to visit, ask questions, display your turtles and tortoises, and spend the afternoon with turtle enthusiasts. If you would like to assist with one of the booths or exhibit turtles, let us know by May 15.

GCTTS members will host a workshop with booths covering the following topics:

- habitats and care of box turtles
- habitats and care of water turtles and semi-aquatics
- habitats and care of tortoises
- landscaping for turtles and edible plants
- rehabilitation and disease
- conservation

GCTTS has a range of printed information including diet, habitat construction, compatible plants lists, and general care, all of which will be available. During the meeting we will have drawings for turtle habitat plants.

We look forward to seeing as many members (and their turtles and tortoises!) as possible at this upcoming event!

Outreach Requests

It doesn't take long to find out how little the general public knows of the issues and husbandry of chelonians. Too many still believe turtles live on lettuce and follow the care advice from their pet store. Why not share some of what you have learned from GCTTS with those in need of this information?



GCTTS has an outreach guide available to assist those interested in speaking at a library, nature center, school or scout program. For those looking for something less structured, GCTTS participates in many fairs where help at our booth is needed. Even a beginner can help at the booth events as at least one experienced volunteer is at each function of this sort. Perhaps you would like to help just by exhibiting some of your turtles and tortoises. Please let us know!

For our outreach guide with a sample talk to get you started call the hot line and leave your mailing address or e-mail address.

The Houston SPCA has asked GCTTS for a speaker for March 16, June 8, and July 13 at 11:00 am for children 8-12 years old. The SPCA is located at 900 Portway Dr, just north of Memorial Park. Wendy Mahoney presented the March 16 program and reported a very nice group were in attendance. Julie Young, will speak at the June 8 event but we are still in need of a speakers for the July program. Anyone wishing to speak, assist or exhibit turtles, let us know.

GCTTS member, Bob Smither, will be giving a program Wednesday, May 10, 2006, from 10:30am-11:00am to the Rainard School. The school has just built an outdoor habitat for a box turtle so the focus of the talk will be on that species, along with an interesting display of turtles and tortoises.

The Kingwood United Methodist Church has requested a speaker for one of the first three Wednesday's in June from 9:30-11:00 A. M. They are interested in having a children's talk on general information and care of turtles, with a live turtle. If you are interested in doing this program, please let us know by May 20.

GCTTS member, Wendy Mahoney, will be giving a children's program on turtles to the Crosby Library June 15, 10:30. 135 Hare Rd, Crosby, TX

GCTTS will man a booth at the National Association of Biology Teachers Regional Workshop, held at Kingwood College, Friday, June 16, from 10 A. M. to 4 P. M. The audience will be biology teachers and professors from the greater Gulf Coast region. If you can help at our booth, please let us know.

Wendy Mahoney, will be giving a program on turtles for children ages 6 and up at the Pearland Public Library. June 26, 2PM, 3522 Liberty Drive Pearland, TX

The Barbara Bush Library has requested a speaker for July 27th, 2006. Audience estimate is 80 children, primarily 6 to 10 years old. GCTTS does not have a volunteer for this event, so let us know if you are interested in presenting this program. The Library is located at 6817 Cypresswood Drive, Spring, TX

Bob Smither or Wendy Mahoney will be giving a GCTTS program on turtles and tortoises at Jessie H. Jones Park and Nature Center, August 5 at 10:00 am. The Park is located in North Houston at 20634 Kenswick Drive, Humble. If you would like to assist or exhibit turtles, let us know.

New GCTTS Web Page: Featured Rescue Turtle of the Month

In case you haven't noticed, we've recently added a new web page to the GCTTS website. It's called, "Featured Rescue Turtle of the Month." Sometimes we receive turtles with interesting histories that do not need rehabilitating or we have received ill or injured turtles in the past that have not been pictured on the website. We hope you will check out this new web page often at

<http://www.gctts.org/WS/WS.php/Public/SeeOurFeaturedTurtleOfTheMonth>

to read about these turtles and tortoises. Here is the story on our March turtle of the month. See the web page for a picture of her and others:



Our featured turtle of the month for March 2006 is a large, wild, adult female Red-eared Slider named Cookie. She's named that because she is one tough Cookie. Cookie was found near a drainage ditch, last month (February 2006), by someone living in the area. Because she had obvious serious damage to her shell, this person wasn't sure whether she needed attention so they got her to one of the GCTTS rehabbers for

evaluation. At one time Cookie's injuries had been serious. She was probably hit by a car in the Summer of 2005 but made her way back to the water where she eventually started healing without intervention by humans. Cookie's strong immune system allowed her to heal on her own. We can never know how many other turtle's in Cookie's situation do not survive their injuries on their own. When in doubt, it's always best to get an injured turtle you find to a rehabilitator and let them decide what is best.

Cookie has nice healthy solid tissue that is turning to bone so she needs no treatment. She will be released very soon into a better, safer habitat where she can finish living out her life in the wild. Your donations and memberships help to feed and care for turtles like Cookie. [Cookie has since been released back into the wild.]

Adoptable Turtles & Tortoises!

Information about those animals available for adoption to our members can be seen anytime at:

<http://www.gctts.org/database-ro/adoption/>

Turtles will be available for adoption by May 15, following their final post-hibernation checkups, and be added to the web site at that time, along with their photos. Afterward the database will be updated weekly so check back from time to time, and remember if you are interested in an uncommon species, submit your adoption application for approval well in advance as those are usually adopted



very quickly to those already on the waiting list.

GCTTS has the turtle and tortoise adoption applications available on our website or via email. Those of you waiting for responses to your adoption or fostering applications will be hearing back from us by May 15.

Outreach Director Position Available!

If you would like to organize the outreach programs for GCTTS, contact Julie Young at info@gctts.org or leave a message for her on our hot line 281-443-3383. This would involve responding to organizations that are requesting our participation, letting the directors know an event has been requested, and getting back with the organization to confirm (and then handle the details) or decline.

Help the GCTTS Newsletter

We need a Newsletter Editor! Is there a budding editor out there with good writing skills and time enough to help? The Newsletter Editor should be somewhat computer savvy, and will be responsible for assembling the Newsletter from articles sent in by our members and directors. If anyone is interested in performing this very important job for our Society, please let us know.

If you have any articles of interest for the next newsletter, send them to info@gctts.org. Remember, this is OUR newsletter - everyone has the opportunity to contribute!

Upcoming ETHS Program at the Houston Zoo

The next ETHS program will be The Frustrations of Keeping and Breeding Freshwater Turtles by Russ Gurley, 7:45 PM, Friday, May 19, 2006, The Brown Education Building of The Houston Zoo.

Russ's presentation will focus on his work with a variety of turtles from South America. Some species from South America have very inflexible needs to thrive in captivity, others require conditions unlike many other species of turtles, and others adapt well to captivity and even reproduce well, but eggs fail to develop and hatch. A variety of species will be covered with a colorful multi-media presentation and theories and ideas related to South American turtle keeping will be discussed.

Did you know that...

...often, when a female turtle lays eggs in the Spring, those eggs can go straight into the incubator and if the same female lays eggs in the Fall, those eggs will need to be cooled before incubation or they will fail to hatch?

...some turtle eggs, if incubated on vermiculite or perlite, will go full-term and the baby will be unable to hatch out of the egg? Add a handful of damp peat moss to the mix and the baby will hatch out easily after the incubation period.

...some tortoise eggs need to be warmed at 80 F for a month, then cooled to 65 F for two months, and then warmed to 84 F for several more months to hatch?

Russ Gurley was a founding member of the American Federation of Herpetoculturists and worked as its Art Director in the early days. He is now a full-time author and director of the Turtle and Tortoise Preservation Group, a group of turtle and tortoise breeders dedicated to producing the world's rarest species. The TTPG hosts TURTLE NIGHT at the National Reptile Breeders Expo each summer. Russ travels extensively photographing turtles and enclosures and digs deep into captive breeding programs around the world to gain new ideas and methods for the best way to keep and breed turtles. Russ's personal turtle breeding programs have an emphasis on species from South America, Africa, and Madagascar but the TTPG breeders cover all the bases . . . some keepers specializing in North American species, others in Asian and Southeast Asian species, and more. Russ is the author of a dozen books including Keeping and Breeding Freshwater Turtles, Baby Turtles, Turtles in Captivity, SULCATAS and Other Popular Tortoise species, and The African Spurred Tortoise in Captivity.

The East Texas Herpetological Society programs are held each odd numbered month at The Houston Zoo in the Brown Education Center. For meeting information, see:

<http://www.eths.org/html/meetings.htm>

Diamondback Terrapin Article in the Chronicle

GCTTS Member Bill Montgomery (by e-mail)

In case you missed Shannon Tompkins' diamondback terrapin story in the Chronicle:

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/outdoors/tompkins/3678959.html>



1980's TV Show Magnum P.I. and Sea Turtles?

Sounds like an unlikely combination doesn't it? But they are related. If you remember the popular 1980's show Magnum P.I. starring Tom Selleck, then you remember it was filmed in Hawaii. Mr. Selleck's character, Thomas Magnum, lived on an estate called Robin's Nest. A Mrs. Eve Anderson actually owns the estate and before the show was filmed there, the estate was nicknamed "Pahonu" which means "sea turtle" in Hawaiian. The tidal pool along the beach front property was used for raising sea turtles. You must also remember the famous iron gate at the entrance to the estate that Magnum drove Robin Masters red Ferrari through many times. The original gate was replaced during the filming of the show but supposedly it has since been reinstalled. This original gate has a sea turtle icon on it. To see this clever sea turtle gate, please click on this link:

<http://www.pbase.com/goislands/image/10751686>

Plans for Conservation of Amazon River Turtles in Bolivia

"Collaborating with Local Bolivian Communities to Develop a National Park Management Plan Designed to Halt the Decline of the Amazon River Turtles"

by Alison Lipman
Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia
Submitted by Anita Peddicord

Turtle populations are declining worldwide because they are especially vulnerable to overexploitation as a source of food and alteration of their habitat (largely stemming from deforestation, agriculture, timber extraction, and rural and urban development). In addition, energy development through hydroelectric dams is modifying the natural river flow patterns and altering the flood stage causing some prime nesting sites to become flooded. Ms. Lipman plans to study the population of the Yellow-spotted Amazon river turtle and the Giant South American river turtle, both threatened species, in the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park in Bolivia. She will initiate, research and develop a balanced approach to managing the future of these turtles by assessing the abundance, reproductive fitness, migration, and habitat health of the turtle population. Her management plan for the national park will help them succeed with their conservation goals, while incorporating a sustainable species harvest for the neighboring communities who depend on the turtles for food and oil. This collaborative effort will link the protection of nearby natural areas with improving the quality of local community life.

Who Hides Where?

By GCTTS Member Julie Young

I always find it interesting when I come out to my turtle pen, to see which critter has chosen which spot to dig in to.

There are some turtles that I KNOW I can find in a specific spot. Surprisingly, my most aggressive male (an ornate box) doesn't seem to mind sharing his place with others - as long as he gets to be in there. His choice is a cave I built out of 2x4 lumber. It's about 8x15 with one open side, and the turtles have dug a dip in one corner. He's ALWAYS in that cave. There are other turtles who are OCCASIONALLY in there, also I can count on a mud turtle. The only thing that differs is that whoever gets there first, gets to be down in the dip.

I have a tunnel I built out of the same 2x4 lumber. It's one board high, and maybe eight inches wide, and is open on both ends. Perfectly good home, but, generally, NO turtles ever go in there. Weird.

I have a large hollow log, and the majority of my three-toed box turtles, as well as an occasional mud turtle, like to hide underneath it. Occasionally, during the morning or daytime, they will get inside it. Apparently, for night time cover, they feel more secure being below it. A few other box turtles hide in holes they've dug along the fence line.

I have a hollow tree stump in the far corner of the pen. This is usually occupied by a female ornate. Although I think of it as "her" territory, it's not uncommon to find another turtle there at times, usually a colorful male three-toed. In that case, the female ornate will be with the three-toeds under vegetation along the fence.

In the baby pen (completely covered by hardware cloth wire screen), there are two chunks of broken clay sewer pipe. These make nice shelters shaped something like an airplane hanger. MOST of the babies get under the smaller, lower pipe. NO ONE EVER gets under the somewhat larger one, which sits a mere 1/2 inch away. The remaining babies hang around a log that's in the pen, on the side that's very near the fence. Unless they're eating or sunning, it's unusual to find any of the babies out in the open areas of the pen. It will be interesting to track this as they grow larger. One is now nearly ready to join the adults. It will be interesting to see if, as she grows, she eventually feels safe enough to be out and about and more visible.

