

**Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society Newsletter**  
**Volume 3, No. 1 – July 1997**

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*Please accept our apologies for the extreme lateness of this newsletter. Due to the tragedy that the Smither family is dealing with, Bob Smither has chosen to pass on the duties of newsletter editor to others. GCTTS wishes to express our gratitude to Bob for his leadership in our organization and for his generosity with his time and talents as creator and editor of this newsletter.*



## General Interest

### ***Terrapene ornata*— this issue's celebrity turtle!**

By Michael J. Conner of California Turtle and Tortoise Club (<http://www.tortoise.org/>)

Ornate box turtles are small, pretty, very distinctive turtles with yellow striations on the brownish carapace and plastron. As with other members of the genus *Terrapene*, they have a hinge on the plastron that allows them to completely close their head, tail and limbs inside their shell. Ornate box turtles differ from the common box turtle group by having a strong pattern of radiating lines on each scute on the

plastron (generally plain in *T. carolina*). The ridge along the carapace above the spine found in the common box turtle is replaced by a yellow line on the carapace. Ornate box turtles also tend to be of a more pugnacious attitude than other box turtles. (editor's note: *Terrapene carolina florida* has a similar carapace and may be mistaken for an ornate, but the plastron does not have the ornate's radiating line and the skin markings are dark spotted with yellow.)

Mature male ornate box turtles are splendid creatures. In addition to their ornamental shell markings they often have solid green heads and purple tongues, and may have red or yellow markings on the front legs. They also have larger tails than the females, often have red eyes (light to dark brown in females and immature males), and have in-turned claws on the rear feet that aid in gripping the female during mating.

There are two sub-species of ornate box turtle found in the United States. The ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata ornata*) from Indiana and eastern Wyoming south to Louisiana and New Mexico, and the less commonly seen desert ornate (*Terrapene ornata luteola*) from southeastern Arizona, New Mexico and the Trans-Pecos region of Texas south into Sonora and Chihuahua Mexico. The luteola form has thinner but more numerous striations on the carapacial scutes (The second pleural scute bears 11-14 radiations in luteola compared to 5-8 in ornata). Occasionally the pattern on very old luteola specimens has faded, giving a more uniform straw-yellow or greenish color to the shell. Perhaps reflecting its wide range, the physical appearance of *T. ornata ornata* is variable, and intergrades occur where the sub-species overlap.

Although parts of their natural range are drier and less humid than those of the common box turtle, they still tend to be most active during and after rainstorms. Like other box turtles, they must have free access to water in captivity.

Healthy ornates are very active and alert turtles. They do poorly in small cages and should be housed outdoors unless they are too young or too ill. I house them in a large partly shaded pen. The pen has a small, shallow pond that they drink from--shallow because ornate box turtles tend to be poor swimmers and may drown in deeper water. I am constantly amazed at the surprising speed and dexterity with which they hunt and chase down beetles, water roaches, and crickets in their enclosure. They are also very temperamental. They will run out and beg for food when I walk by, yet if I offer the food by hand they may (depending on their mood) hiss at me even while they eat it! They are most active in the early morning or evening, but will come out of their hiding places in the piles of leaf litter and grass clippings to chase bugs whenever I soak down their pen.

Unfortunately, although commonly offered for sale in pet stores, wild-caught adults do not acclimate well and invariably need special care and attention. The majority of ornate box turtles found in the pet trade seem to be in a highly distressed state, suffering from severe malnutrition, dehydration, and bacterial and parasitic infections, and they rarely thrive without extensive and expensive medical treatment. I get many calls from helpless new owners who have bought an ornate box turtle that within hours or days showed classic signs of illness - refusal to eat, eyes swollen or jammed shut, a white tongue, runny nose, occasional gasps for breath. With considerable effort (including rehydration, force-feeding and systemic antibiotic therapy) many of these animals can recover. However, adjusting to captivity can be as difficult for wild caught ornates as the most delicate of exotic reptiles. I generally advise against buying any turtles through the retail pet trade. If you wish to acquire a box turtle try the adoption committee, or buy captive bred hatchlings. Obtaining healthy animals is well worth the wait.

**Did you know** – the ornate box turtle is the state reptile of Kansas? (The state reptile of Texas is, of course, the horned lizard!)

## **Turtle Tips**

*by Marlaina Barr*

Shallow ponds and water bowls will overheat during the hot summer months unless they are completely shaded by floating plants or placed in a full shade location. 80°F is a good temperature for a water source. If there is any doubt about water temperature, buy a thermometer and check it during the hot part of a day.

Aggression may be the fault of one turtle, but is usually a sign of overcrowding. In nature, turtles have a fight or flight option, and normally choose to leave the scene. In captivity, getting away from an aggressive pen or pond mate is not so easy. If aggression is a problem, removing the aggressor will provide an immediate fix. However, if the problem is chronic, try reducing the size of your turtle population or increasing the size of their habitat.

If your turtles are picky eaters, feed them less often. Overfeeding is common in captivity – so are spoiled, picky turtles. This makes providing a balanced, varied diet a challenge. Adding vitamin/mineral supplements to a turtle's favorite foods is no substitute for a proper diet. Turtles are opportunistic feeders and will eat anything if they are hungry. Beware – turtles maintained on diets with only a few food types may fail to recognize new diet items as food. If you have a spoiled turtle in a diet rut, try offering the familiar foods only once a week and new items in-between. Then increase the time between favorites to 2 weeks as menu diversity is increased.

Sick turtles tend to come out into the open more often and stay there longer than do healthy ones. Many turtles collected from the wild are easily captured because they are in the open due to illness. Any wild-collected turtle should be observed long and hard for possible health problems.

Parasites and disease flourish in filtration systems indoors and out. To prevent infection, change out the water frequently, filter or no filter.

Water turtles can drown if they become trapped in crevices of rock piles. Make sure that underwater passageways and hiding places easily accommodate the size of the turtles in the

habitat. Double check rock piles for stability. Shifting rocks can pin a turtle underwater resulting in drowning.

Female turtles needing to lay eggs must have continuous access to high ground. Females may spend weeks roaming their habitat in search of the best place to deposit eggs, sometimes even digging a hole and then deciding against laying eggs there. For this reason, taking a female outside occasionally will not provide for her needs. If conditions are not ideal, the turtle may refuse to lay eggs, which can create a serious health issue. Extended roaming, lack of appetite, and wobbly back legs are signs to watch for. Swollen back legs or lethargy (to the point of not using the back legs) are signs of blockage, egg binding, or eggs ruptured internally. These conditions require immediate veterinary attention. A proper habitat and healthy diet are extremely important for reproductive success in turtles.

Turtles with flesh or shell wounds including neck bites must be immediately protected from flies. Fly strike is common and maggot infestation is a serious problem. Injured turtles should be quarantined in a screened area or container with a screen top that is in a full shade location. Turtles should not be relocated to a cool house or hot garage.

Turtle ailments usually result from poor husbandry – improper feeding, overcrowding, inadequate pens/housing. If your turtles are sick, question your husbandry. Taking a sick turtle to the vet may get it well, but does little good if the recovered turtle is returned to the same poor habitat or diet. Educating yourself about proper husbandry is the best thing that you can do for your turtles.

## **Illegal Trafficking of Turtles and Other Animals**

*Excerpts from article reprinted with permission -*

*Understaffed and Overworked*

*The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service tries to*

monitor trade in illegal species  
© 1996 Paula Morris The Bridge,  
December 1996/January-February 1997  
quarterly edition

The Southwestern Herpetologists Society (Tri-Counties Branch), luckily for me, meets at our natural history museum. SWHS always attracts terrific speakers and their last meeting was no exception. Joe Ventura, wildlife inspector for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Los Angeles International Airport, gave an informative talk and slide presentation on the incredible traffic in wild animals—not all of it legal—that comes under his scrutiny.

Unlike the agents who carry guns, go undercover and monitor hunting violations, Ventura says that he's strictly a wildlife inspector, checking import and export legal compliance with C.I.T.E.S. and the Endangered Species Act requirements. His duties include inspecting not only live shipments, but shipments of wildlife curios.

Wildlife shipments generate \$6 billion annually and is second only to drugs in profitability. Up to 30% of that traffic (about \$4 billion) goes through LAX each year. This flow is monitored by TRAFFIC USA, a division of the World Wildlife Fund and includes both plants and animals. Ventura's area is understaffed because the focus is on drugs in commercial shipments. There are 200 agricultural and customs inspectors, while the wildlife facility has only ten inspectors. Ventura notes that much of what comes into a country is destined to die. Most confiscated skins, trophies and wildlife curios end up in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lab in Ashland, Oregon, a high-tech facility that determines the origins of confiscated wildlife.

The loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*), a popular smuggling item, are coming into the country at a much slower rate and at a smaller size than previously. All seven species of sea turtles are endangered and those that are confiscated tend to be juveniles. Sea turtle eggs, however, are very big now for their aphrodisiac value.

Many plant and animal species are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora. Known as CITES, it is a multinational agreement by participating countries (parties). But the CITES conventions are frequently flouted by the parties by routing shipments through non-participating countries. An Appendix I listing prevents commercial trade in live animals, their parts or derivatives; Appendix II permits trade under certain controls; and an Appendix III listing

allows trade only with an export permit from the country listing the animal, or a certificate of origin from a country that didn't list it.

Thailand frequently violates the Conventions, as does Indonesia. A biological study among the CITES parties revealed that Indonesia often lies, in one instance doctoring a quota of CITES II tortoises from seven up to seven thousand. Food, medicinal, and pet industries are mingled in Asia and deception is rampant. Ghana and Togo in Africa have horrible shipping practices, with high mortality the norm.

America isn't exempt from cruelty, either. We exported 6,138,000 Red-ear sliders in a single year. In fact, Ventura pointed out that on November 16, 1996, one hundred thousand sliders were shipped to Europe. From Europe the sliders will be distributed to Argentina, Korea, and Hong Kong. The turtles originate in Louisiana. At one time they would go to Chicago to New York and outward from there. A 50% mortality rate by Chicago wasn't uncommon. The animals were stacked like plates on their sides where they'd stay until destinations like Holland. "The Bog turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergi*) is the third most sought-after commodity in the world," said Ventura. "They're CITES I-listed and can sell for up to \$10,000 each. The most sought-after is the rhino horn, and, after that, tiger bone. The *Cuora flavomarginata*, commonly known as the Asian snake-eating box turtle, retails for about \$20 in the pet trade. The *Cuora trifasciata* (Three-banded box turtle) however, is considered a great delicacy in Hong Kong, where one can be purchased for \$900 U.S. Ventura recounted a story where an Asian businessman spotted an American associate's turtle terrarium and resident *C. trifasciata*. He asked him how he planned to prepare it.

Other valuable reptiles and amphibians are: the Big-headed turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*); the Tuntong turtle (*Batagur baska*); Mata-matas (a very popular smuggling item); *Podocnemis expansa* (Arrau River turtle); and Surinam toads.

Rather than let Congress gut the Endangered Species Act, it had to be demonstrated that the Act was working. To this end, the Indian flap-shelled turtle (*Lissemys punctata*) was removed, since, with protection, its numbers were again growing.

"Mortality in reptiles is phenomenal," said Ventura, and gave us a rundown on the status of some of the most popular reptiles and some interesting facts.

Wood turtles are quite rare in the pet trade now because they're vigorously protected within their ranges



## **Grow your own tortoise treats**

The following is a reprint of a web article entitled "Tortoise Foraging Mix" by Annie Lancaster of South Bay Tortoise Rehab in San Jose, CA.

<http://www.sonic.net/daltons/melissa/forage.html>

### **To grow your own tortoise foraging field:**

Mix together the following seeds and pasture seed mixes to cover a 30 square foot area.

**5 pounds Dryland Pasture Mix, which contains (premixed):** 75% Annual Ryegrass, 10% Crimson Red Clover, 5% Blando Bromegrass, 5% Mt. Barker Subterranean Clover, 5% Rose Clover

**5 pounds Irrigated Pasture Mix, which contains (premixed) :** 34% Tetraploid Perennial Rye, 30% Tetraploid Annual Rye, 8% Alfalfa, 6% Birdsfoot Trefoil (Broadleaf), 6% Kenland Red Clover, 6% Ladino Clover, 5% Subteranean Clover, 5% Strawberry Clover

**5 pounds of Dutch white clover seed (or more if you can afford it!)**

### **1 pound oat grass seed**

Loosen the soil (hoe or rototill) and add some organic soil to make a soft bed for the seeds but one firm enough so the sprouts can take hold.

You can mix together, thoroughly, all of the above seeds, or apply them, in layers, directly to the ground.

Spread the seeds thickly on the ground until you cannot see of the any soil beneath it.

Cover the seeds with 1/2 inch organic potting mix or soil; use a potting mix that does *not* contain the small balls of white polymers or perlite. Tamp lightly.

The clovers should start to sprout within 48 hours. In a couple of weeks, smaller tortoises may start grazing on it. For larger tortoises, wait at least one month or a little longer if weather hasn't warmed enough yet to stimulate rapid growth. Annie notes...I like to mix so many different varieties because they all grow at different times during the year. My leopards have been housed all year outside, and even in the worst weather they had plenty of forage on which to graze..then they'd sit in their comfy heated house and look out the window! The two *babcocki* I have here keep this beautifully mowed. They graze all day on it, and it withstands their foot traffic pretty well. In addition, I throw out Dutch clover seed at various times during the year. It seems to root just fine after the other grasses have established themselves. I plant this *very* thick because, if I don't, the animals graze it quickly.

## **Turtle Tales**

*(editor's note: this will be a regular column – provided some of you contribute. Please send in or call in anecdotes from your experiences with turtles. Your comments may provide a lesson in*

*husbandry – or even a lesson in life? – that will benefit someone else. The following 2 stories are my own just to get us started.)*

**Amy's close call** - My first and still favorite box turtle is a beautiful 3-toed female with a sweet face and very wise eyes. Amy has been with me for 5 years and taught me the ropes of how to keep a turtle safely confined. She is so tame that she was returned to me after a neighbor boy removed her from her pen and forgot to replace her (after which he also had to forget what my back yard is like). When I discovered that she had wandered off, I was heartbroken and placed a "Lost Turtle" sign at the end of our block. 2 days later, a nice neighbor returned her to me – he said he knew she had to be a pet because instead of closing up when he found her, she stuck her head out for a nice little rub. Well, Amy had always been so healthy and easy to care for that I took her health for granted. Last fall, a more responsible neighbor boy was looking at our turtles and picked her up. He asked me why she had a bloody spot on her plastron. Poor Amy had shell rot! If the boy had not picked her up, I would have let her go into hibernation ill. It scares me to think what would have happened. I learned my lesson and regularly check over all of my turtles for problems now. Amy is fully recovered after antibiotic treatment and has not let the experience change her charming personality!

**My fire ant tragedy** – Two summers ago, I was lucky enough to adopt 2 ornate box turtle babies. They were the cutest little things and my kids loved their little tough personalities. I fenced in a new turtle area in a flowerbed just for them. It was small, but so were they. I will never forget the morning I went out to check on them and saw a stream of fire ants flowing over the wall of the enclosure. They had killed and pretty much devoured the babies. I felt sick. I initially blamed the incident on the location of the pen against my back fence where ants might be just on the other side but not visible to me. Probably though, the small size of the area and the fact that I had left fruit out for the turtles were bigger factors. The food may have attracted the ants and the turtles had nowhere to run. Moral of a very sad story – don't leave food out for extended periods, especially in a small habitat.

## **Questions and Answers**

*(editor's note: This will be a regular column. Please send in or call in any questions that you might have about turtles – at the very least, the question will be published and maybe someone out there has the answer!)*

**Q.** Do any of your members have husbandry

experience with Diamondback terrapins? I know terrapins forage in the wild, but since I work and my picky, picky charmer of a terrapin only likes the tidbit she can see sinking in front of her, I have no way to help her behave naturally. Like me, she's got to wait until mealtime. So far it hasn't seemed to harm her, but I'm just curious how other keepers feed their Diamondbacks. Thanks in advance for any feedback on this.

**A.** The key to proper husbandry with any turtle/tortoise is to think of things from the animal's perspective – what is its wild habitat like and how can you come closest to recreating that habitat? Clean, brackish water is best for diamondbacks as they are fairly vulnerable to fungal infections (and advised for many water turtles for the same reason). These terrapins are highly carnivorous and should be provided with foods similar to what they could catch in the wild. That would include whole feeder fish, insects, worms, etc. Most water turtles cannot resist crustaceans – shrimp, crayfish. Some current research, however, suggests that some crustaceans may harbor the bacteria that cause shell rot in turtles. Although it is not certain that these bacteria are passed to turtles from these food items, it may be a good idea to cook these treats before offering them to the turtle. Turtle food can also be included but should not be the only thing they are fed. Feeding about 3 times a week is sufficient. As with all turtles, an outdoor habitat is healthiest for the diamondback terrapin and will encourage a healthy appetite as well as avoiding other health problems. (Thanks to Marlaina Barr for fielding this question.)

**Q.** I want to build an outdoor habitat for my box turtles. How big does it need to be?

**A.** For one box turtle, a habitat measuring 8 ft. x 10 ft. is adequate. It should, of course, have shady areas, plenty of soft dirt for burrowing, some hiding areas for your turtle's reclusive moods, and a clean water supply (deep enough for wallowing). If you have more than one turtle, allow at least an additional 4 ft. x 4 ft. area for each additional animal. Basically, the larger the area the better. Plenty of space allows more natural foraging by turtles, results in less fecal buildup with its accompanying parasite transmission problems, and presents less danger of disease transmission. For more information on outdoor habitats, call Marlaina Barr at 281-443-8001 and ask for care sheets on this topic.

**Q.** In this very rainy year, I have had fire ants appear more than once in my turtle area. How can I kill them without dumping poison in the turtles' habitat?

**A.** This is a not an uncommon problem. One way to “organically” kill ants is to boil a large pan of water with some orange peels thrown in. Carefully dump the boiling solution onto the ant pile. The boiling water along with the citrus skin juices usually does the trick the first time. (If anyone out there has another ant solution, please send it in.)

# GCTTS Information

## **Laura Smither Memorial Fund**

Tracy Scannell

Dear GCTTS Members and Friends,

The response to the plans for the memorial for Laura Smither has been phenomenal. Thanks to all for your generosity and support for Bob and his family. Enough funds are available for two granite benches to be placed at the Armand Bayou Nature Center. One will be engraved as follows: In Memory of Laura Smither. The other will be engraved with a vine and flowers. The benches will be installed on concrete pads. The benches, engraving and installation are being provided at cost to us by National Memorial Planning Company of Pasadena. A heartfelt thanks is due Mr. Dave Koch of National Memorial Planning Company for all his assistance. The order for the benches was placed June 9<sup>th</sup>, and they should be ready for installation in about 90 days. We will be in contact with the nature center as to the exact date they will be in place. The following is a list of those who have contributed to the Laura Smither Memorial Fund. Thanks you once again for your generosity.

Chris and Marlaina Barr  
Henry Brockman  
Charles and Julie Burns, DVM  
Paul Cooley  
John C. Davis  
James Finigan  
Janis Hatcher  
Irene Kowal  
Mark Lonabaugh  
Carol Mata  
Judy Meschwitz  
Milt and Joan Miller  
Jonathan and Karla Nast  
Judy Nickens  
Christopher Nicolosi  
Deborah C. Nichols

Marilyn Oliva  
Larry and Becky Offenbacher  
Mark Peckham, DVM  
Shelley, Kathleen, and Michael Penrod  
Jonathan Perez  
Debra Purtee  
Richard and Dorthea Robinson  
Richard and Susan Robinson  
Janet and Jay Russo  
Paul Scannell  
Glen A. Spraker  
Lisa and Curtis Sitz  
Ann and Mrs. E.F. Smylie  
Mary Swearingen  
Timoty Wasp  
Judy Zuniga-Hyde

If anyone has any questions or input, please contact Tracy Scannell at 281-328-5366.

## Volunteer Spotlight – Tracy Scannell

*By Shelley Penrod and Marlaina Barr*

Tracy Scannell has been a GCTTS member since the inception of the club and has helped immensely to guide our organization to its current level of success. Tracy has always loved animals and, as a child, had her share of baby red-eared sliders pass through that plastic turtle pond with the artificial palm tree. Her attraction to turtles was rekindled when her son, Paul (who is also an active member of our group), reached kindergarten age and wanted a turtle. Tracy decided on an area in her yard for a habitat and bought a box turtle from a pet store. Most likely sick from the time it was brought home, the turtle soon died. Tracy had seen a notice about a local “turtle club” and attended a meeting to become better educated and avoid any more such tragedies. Thus began a mutually beneficial relationship between GCTTS and Tracy and Paul.

In spite of the time requirements of a job (she works at her husband’s dentistry practice), active involvement with Paul’s boy scout troop, and the demands of a home and family, Tracy has always been extremely generous with her time in doing volunteer work for GCTTS. She has involved her son’s scout troop in many releases of rehabbed water turtles, leading the boys on a lengthy hike to a secluded area on Lake Houston where the turtles have a great chance for success in the wild. She and Paul have rescued many turtles (with Paul even demanding that she buy a couple of softshells from a kid to save them from life in a bucket!). In addition, Tracy has given numerous programs on turtles and proper turtle husbandry to schools and libraries. She can always be counted on to man the GCTTS table at Earth Day presentations, and has made monetary and equipment donations to rehab efforts. Tracy was the organizer of the KLDE sponsored fund raiser at Astroworld. This effort included many meetings at the radio station and other organizations, preparation of activities for children, design and procurement of member T-shirts for the event, and everything else that went into the “take your picture with a turtle” fundraiser. Tracy also does almost all of the artwork for GCTTS including banners, business forms, etc. (blame her for your “renewal is due” card!). She takes responsibility for newspaper publicity releases for GCTTS programs. She also helps call members and potential members with information about GCTTS programs. It goes without saying that GCTTS would not be what it is today without Tracy Scannell. She certainly

deserves to be in the spotlight!

So how about Tracy’s own turtles? Many happy turtles now occupy a model turtle environment in her backyard. Some of them, including T-2, Paul’s favorite, are among the stars of GCTTS’s regular turtle programs.

### **ATTENTION: Bryan/College Station turtle lovers!**

Marie Eungard is the GCTTS contact person for your area. Marie welcomes questions about husbandry, rescue, rehab, adoptions, educational program, membership, etc. Her address is 1109 Allen Forest in Bryan, TX 77803. Her phone number is 409-774-7146.

### **New corresponding secretary!**

Julie Young has taken on the responsibilities of GCTTS corresponding secretary. This is a very important role in our organization – Julie deserves our appreciation. **Other organizations** – please note that newsletter exchange will now go through Julie (see address under society contacts.) Thanks to Leslie Barker for handling this previously.

### **Newsletter contributions?**

The new editor of this newsletter would love some help! If you have any suggestions, turtle anecdotes, articles, turtle questions you’d like answers for, etc., please send them to Shelley Penrod (address under “Newsletter” below). Your contributions can be in just about any form – ready to publish essays, notes that you’d like me to turn into a column, phone/e-mail messages with information for an article or news item, etc. Let me know if your name can appear or if you’d rather remain anonymous. Member contributions give this publication personality (not to mention content)! Please send them in!

### **Rehab needs**

The rehab area is in desperate need of 20 gallon or larger aquaria, powerheads, and undergravel filters. These are needed by winter. If you or anyone you know has any of these items to contribute, please contact Marlaina Barr (281-443-8001).

### **What we’ve been doing**

GCTTS members were quite busy at **Earth Day presentations** during April. We had displays at Armand Bayou, The Woodlands, and Brazos Bend Park on April 19<sup>th</sup>. We were at the Houston Zoo on April 20<sup>th</sup> and the Johnson Space Center on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. There was also a table at the North Harris College Earth Day on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

Participating members included Judy Meschwitz, Marie Eungard, Leslie Barker, Ann Smylie, Shelley Penrod, Tracy and Paul Scannell, Marlaina and Chris Barr, Joan Miller, Beverly Logan, Lise Leigh, and Erika Davis.

In addition, several of our members have presented **outreach educational programs**. These programs are vital in educating turtle and tortoise owners about proper husbandry. Without informed volunteers making the effort to share information, many new turtle owners may rely on pet stores and outdated turtle books their only source of information. Program presenters have included Leslie Barker, Janis Hatcher, Tracy Scannell, Carlo Minotti, Julie Young, Beverly Logan, Jim Finigan, Johnathan Perez, Tim Rask, and Bob Smither. If anyone wishes to volunteer to help with future programs, please call Janis Hatcher at 281-353-3622.

Thanks to the following members who have helped with turtle rescues – Chris Nicholosi, Beverly Logan, Shelley Penrod, Tracy Scannell, Shelly Dewey, Chip Zimmerman, Kim Hanley, Lisa Rhodes, Diane Bacon, Paul Cooley, Shawn Thomas, Janis Hatcher, Bob Smither, Leslie Barker, Blake Johnson, Katherine King, Carlo Minotti, Michelle Thompson, Bonnie Viada (and thanks also to anyone accidentally left out – you know who you are)!

**Great job, volunteers!**

**What’s coming up**

There will be **education outreach programs** at the Heights Library on July 12 with Jim Finigan in charge, and at Meyer Library with Lisa Rhodes and Kim Henley as presenters.

Once again, summer has arrived before we knew it and all those cute little red-ear hatchlings from last year are growing and GROWING and before too long, there will be a new bunch from this spring’s clutches. What to do with all those yearlings and older water turtles that have outgrown their welcome? GCTTS is planning a **turtle release in mid-August** (exact date will be confirmed soon). The site for release is the Lake Houston/San Jacinto River area of the Newport Subdivision in Crosby. We will be able to picnic in the area following the release. If you would care to help release some “rehabbers” and babies, please call Tracy Scannell at 281-328-5366. Any interested parties will be contacted with more details. If you have water turtles you want released, check with Marlaina at 281-443-8001.

They will be checked for illness before being released.

**Houston Arboretum and Nature Center** (4501 Woodway) has asked us to host an educational program on turtles and tortoises. This event is scheduled for **Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup>** from 1-3 PM and will be open to the public. This will be an informal with turtles on display and friendly GCTTS members to talk with visitors and distribute educational material. **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS** – call Marlaina Barr (281-443-8001) or Beverly Logan (713-623-2739).

GCTTS is tentatively scheduled to have an information table at the **East Texas Herpetological Society Breeder Expo**. This open to the public event will be on Sunday, **September 7<sup>th</sup>**. Our main mission is provide information on caring for turtles to those who purchase them at the show. **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS** – call Leslie Barker (281-431-1358).

**Burroughs Park Wildlife Wahoo** is scheduled for Sunday, **October 12** from 2-5 PM. This is an “Earth Day like” presentation with displays from a variety of wildlife/ecology groups. This event attracts a lot of families. **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS** to help at our table. Call Marlaina Barr (281-443-8001).

**East Texas Herpetological Society events:**

The Society has **meetings** every third Friday of each odd numbered month at the Houston Zoo. Call Russ Walker at 409-594-5554 for more information. Also, the **7<sup>th</sup> Annual East Texas Herpetological Society Conference, Breeder Expo and Educational Exhibit** is scheduled for September 5, 6, and 7, 1997 at the Greenspoint Marriott. For more information, call Dave Doherty at 281-367-4963.

**Rescue, Adoption, and Rehab Report**

(10/3/96-6/30/97)

**Water turtles**

<b><u>taken in:</u></b>	male	female	unknown
Adult cooters	2	1	
Juvenile cooters		1	5
Hatchling cooters			9
Adult snappers			3
Juvenile snappers			2
Adult softshells	2		
Adult red ears	10	3	
Juvenile red ears	5	2	
Hatchling red ears			4

**released:** male female unknown

	male	female	unknown
Adult cooters	1		
Juvenile cooters		1	3
Adult snappers			3
Juvenile snappers			1
Adult softshells	1		
Adult red ear	6	7	
Juvenile red ear	3	1	
Hatchling red ear			10

**adopted:** male female unknown

	male	female	unknown
Hatchling cooters			10
Juvenile snappers			1
Adult softshells	1		
Adult red ear		1	
Hatchling red ear			13
Juvenile red belly			1

**in rehab:** male female unknown

	male	female	unknown
Adult cooters	1	1	
Adult red ear	3	5	
Juvenile red ear	2		
Hatchling red ear			3
Adult yellow belly	1		

**AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION:**

	male	female	unknown
Hatchling cooters			15
Hatchling red ear			5

**Please note:** Adoptions are to outdoor habitats only. Adopted turtles must be released when they reach 3-4 inches or provided with a spacious natural in-ground pond. Adoptions are available to members only – contact Marlaina Barr for adoption forms. Please avoid overcrowded conditions for turtles.

**Box turtles**

**taken in:** male female unknown

	male	female	unknown
3-toed adult	5	4	
3-toed juvenile			2
3-toed hatchling			2
Ornate adult	1		
Eastern hatchling			3

**adopted:** male female unknown

	male	female	unknown
3-toed adult	3	1	
3-toed juvenile			2
3-toed hatchling			2
Ornate adult	1		
Eastern hatchling			3

**in rehab:** male female unknown

	male	female	unknown
3-toed adult	2	3	

	male	female	unknown
3-toed hatchling			1
Ornate adult	2		
Gulf coast adult	1		

**AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION:**

	male	female	unknown
3-toed adult	11	4	
3-toed juvenile			12
3-toed hatchling			2
Ornate adult	2		
Eastern hatchling			1

(Ornate & eastern eggs are now incubating!)

**Please note:** Adoptions are to outdoor in-ground habitats only. Adoptions are available to members only – contact Marlaina Barr for adoption forms. Please avoid overcrowded conditions for turtles.

**Treasurer's Report**

(10/14/96 – 7/1/97)

Previous balance - \$477.95

Income - \$929.00

(membership fees - \$385.00; donations - \$482.00; educational sales - \$62.00)

Expenses - \$878.57

(program room - \$50.00; newsletter postage - \$64.00; rehab supplies - \$538.09; educational mail out postage - \$112.40; earth day materials including table rentals, copies, displays - \$102.57, bank charges - \$11.51)

Balance - \$528.38

**GCTTS Facts**

The Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the welfare and conservation of all species of turtles and tortoises. The members of GCTTS offer such services as rescue, rehabilitation, release and adoption of turtles and tortoises as well as maintaining a hotline to answer questions and handle emergencies. Education is one of the central focuses of our group. A newsletter is published and mailed to members. Care sheets and informal classes on turtle care are available at no charge.

Inquiries and donations may be sent to:

Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society  
1227 Whitestone Ln.  
Houston, TX 77073

GCTTS Hotline and FAX:

(281)443-8001

e-mail: GCTTS@c-c-i.com

## **Society Contacts**

### **GCTTS Board members include:**

Leslie Barker  
8918 Bateman Blvd.  
Rosharon, TX 77583  
281-431-1358

Marlaina Barr  
1227 Whitestone Ln.  
Houston, TX 77073  
281-443-8001

Janis Hatcher  
23307 Prairie Blvd.  
Spring, TX 77373  
281-353-3622

Bob Smither  
2600 Ware Dairy Rd.  
Friendswood, TX 77546  
281-331-2548

### **Committee Chairpersons include:**

Corresponding secretary - Julie Young  
P.O. Box 66283  
Houston, TX 77266-6283  
713-528-5614

Membership - Leslie Barker  
281-431-1358

Outreach program - Janis Hatcher  
281-353-3622

Water turtle release – Tracy Scannell  
281-328-5366

Rescue, Rehab, Adoptions, Education  
Turtles – Marlaina Barr  
281-443-8001  
Tortoise – Leslie Barker  
281-431-1358  
Refreshments – Ann Smylie  
713-529-5413

## **Newletter**

This edition of GCTTS newsletter was edited by Shelley Penrod and published by Janis Hatcher. Please send any comments, suggestions, articles, or other newsletter material to Shelley at 9106 Newkay, Spring, TX 77379 or by e-mail to . If you can help edit or publish the newsletter, please contact Shelley (281-320-0476) or Janis (281-353-3622).

## **Information Sources**

### **Web sites**

There are lots of great web sites for turtle lovers. Here are three of the many that are worth visiting:

- 1) <http://thunder.sonic.net/~melissk/index.html>  
This truly excellent resource is geared toward

education and educators. It includes some thought provoking dialogue (some of which may find its way into future issues) and terrific links. (It was also the source of the fiction list below and the link to the tortoise treats article.)

- 2) <http://www.tortoise.org/>

This is the web site of the California Turtle and Tortoise club. It includes general information, pictures, lots of links, and even tortoise breeding calls! (and is the source of the article on ornate box turtles!)

- 3) <http://strp.tamu.edu/default.html>

For sea turtle folks, this site not only includes updates on research efforts but has claims to have links to all sea turtle sites on the web (at least the multitude the site author is aware of)!

**Turtle Fiction**

Here are some books suitable for kids (and possibly adults, too!) with turtles as their main characters and with healthy messages. From: <http://thunder.sonic.net/~melissk/index.html>

**And Still the Turtle Watched**

Sheila MacGill-Callahan. 1991. Dial Books.  
A tale of the flowing of time, of seeing and believing, of carelessness and redemption.

**Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back**

Joseph Bruchac and Jonathon London. 1992. Philomel Books.  
There are thirteen scutes on the turtle's back, and thirteen moons in the lunar year. For many Native American cultures, each moon had a tale to tell. In this book of poems, the cycles of the year, the sharing of myths and stories from generation to generation, are retold. Brouchac has collaborated on another book with some wonderful reptile and environmental and literature, **Keepers of the Animals: Native American Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children**, Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac. 1991. Fulcrum Publishing.

**The Turtle and the Moon**

Charles Turner. 1991. Dutton Children's Books.  
The turtle lives alone in his pond, day after day, with no one to play with. One night, he awakens to find someone else playing in his pond!

**GCTTS Videos**

GCTTS is proud to offer video tapes providing excellent care information as presented by some of Houston's leading reptile experts and veterinarians. The available tapes are:

<b>Guide to Tortoise Keeping</b>		
Leslie Barker		\$15
<b>Turtle Care</b>		
Robin Scott, D.V.M.		\$10
<b>Outdoor Ponds &amp; Water Turtles</b>		
Larry White, D.V. M.		\$10
<b>Respiratory Illness</b>		
Mark Peckham, D.V.M.		\$10
<b>Tortoise Care</b>		
Karl Peterson (Houston Zoo)		\$10

The order form below may be used to order video tapes.

A **volunteer is needed** to handle copying and distribution of video tapes. If you are interested, please call Marlaina Barr at 281-443-8001.

NOTE: All proceeds help to fund GCTTS rehab and education efforts.

Please send me the following video tape(s):		
	<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Guide to Tortoise Keeping	_____	_____
Turtle Care	_____	_____
Outdoor Ponds & Water Turtles	_____	_____
Respiratory Illness	_____	_____
Tortoise Care	_____	_____
-----		
Cost.....		_____
Shipping and Handling.....		<u>\$2.50</u>
Total cost.....		_____

Mail to: GCTTS .  
1227 Whitestone Ln  
Houston, TX 77073

(checks payable to GCTTS)

# Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society

## Membership Application

Our membership dues are:  
Regular: \$10.00 / year / address  
Contributing: \$25.00 / year / address  
Sponsoring: \$50.00 / year / address

Please mail your membership application and dues to:  
GCTTS, 1227 Whitestone, Houston, TX 77073

Name(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently have turtles/tortoises? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what types? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in helping with any of the GCTTS functions? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your areas of interest? \_\_\_\_\_

Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society  
P.O. Box 66283  
Houston, TX 77266-6283