

Southwest Biological Science Center Weekly Highlights February 13, 2006

Studying the Impacts of Mormon Cricket Control in Utah's West Desert: Tim Graham and Anne Brasher (WRD) will be meeting with Clair Allen, Director of the Plant Industry Division of the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, along with the State Entomologist, Ed Bianco and his assistant Clint Burfitt on Tuesday, February 14th, in Moab, UT. They will discuss the status of a 2005 summer project, "Mormon cricket control in Utah's West Desert: impacts on non-target arthropod communities (and implications for vertebrate species at risk)" to clarify any questions on their proposal to extend the study into 2006. The goal of the study is to examine how Mormon cricket control pesticides may be affecting non-target arthropod populations and communities, and whether impacts are significant relative to ecological functions performed by these non-target species, such as decomposition, food for sensitive species, etc. Tim Graham, Moab, UT, (435) 719-2339.

Quantifying water use at Cibola National Wildlife Refuge: USGS scientist Pam Nagler met with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and a group from Alliance Universities (consisting of eight Ohio universities and Colorado State University) on Feb. 7-10 at the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge to prepare field sites for studies on the transpiration rates of riparian species along the Lower Colorado River at Cibola. Their objective is to estimate water use by non-native and native riparian species, such as mixed densities of saltcedar, cottonwood, willow trees, mesquite trees, arrowweed, etc. for recommend restoration (revegetation) alternatives for other areas at Cibola. (Pam Nagler, Tucson, AZ, 520-626-2113)

Mapping arid lands vegetation in Clarke County: On February 14, USGS scientist Pam Nagler flies to Las Vegas to meet with the WRD-USGS at Boulder City, Nevada. They will discuss the logistics of mapping arid lands vegetation in Clarke County, Nevada. (Pam Nagler, Tucson, AZ, 520-626-2113)

Desert Tortoises Center Stage: The Sonoran Desert Research Station is actively involved in this year's Desert Tortoise Council Symposium in Tucson February 17-20. USGS research Cecil Schwalbe will talk about the incredible biodiversity of the tropical deciduous forest in southern Sonora, Mexico, where the desert tortoise reaches the southern limit of its range. University of Arizona graduate student Cristina Jones will present her findings on the distribution of upper respiratory tract disease in desert tortoise in the Kingman and Greater Phoenix areas in Arizona. Brent Sigafus, technical support and research assistant for SDRS, will provide audiovisual support for the symposium. Schwalbe will also co-host the raffle and auction following the symposium banquet. (Cecil Schwalbe, Tucson, AZ, 520-621-5508)

Desert Tortoise Stars in Television Special! USGS scientists Cecil Schwalbe, Southwest Biological Science Center, and Todd Esque and Ken Nussear, Western Ecological Research Center, explain the ecology of, habitats used by, and threats to the desert tortoise on a television program examining the tortoise throughout its latitudinal range. Host David Yetman begins this trek in Utah and Nevada at threatened populations in the Mojave Desert, travels south to Saguaro National Park near Tucson, Arizona, one of the densest populations in the Sonoran Desert, then continues to southern Sonora, Mexico, near the southern end of the tortoises' range in tropical deciduous forest. More than a dozen scientists, tortoise biologists, and managers are interviewed. This 30-minute episode, "On the trail of a living fossil," airs on the Desert Speaks (a weekly series on the Tucson, Arizona, PBS affiliate) at 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 1, and 7 p.m. Sunday, March 5. (Cecil Schwalbe, Tucson, AZ, 520-621-5508, Todd Esque, Henderson, NV, 702-564-4506)