

W. Reed

Subject: Endngrd Species Day 2007 Daily News Article

Groups aim to save rare creatures

Antelope Valley Conservancy hosts second annual Endangered Species Day press conference

BY JIM SKEEN, Daily News Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 05/18/2007 08:48:03 PM PDT



LANCASTER - Protecting the desert wilderness and the species that call it home was the goal Friday as representatives of 16 organizations came together to recognize Endangered Species Day.

In a gathering hosted by the Antelope Valley Conservancy at the Prime Desert Woodlands, members of nonprofit conservation groups and representatives from various government agencies gathered to highlight their efforts to protect open-space areas and rare species.

The event touched on a number of issues, including protecting such endangered and threatened creatures as the desert tortoise, the Mohave ground squirrel and the mountain lion.

One of the themes highlighted by the event was that open-space areas need to be linked in order to be more effective for survival of species.

"We need more connectivity with other open spaces," said Ron Krueper, district superintendent for the newly created Tehachapi district of the state Department of Parks and Recreation. "We have a commitment to connectivity so endangered species can move about us humans."

The Tehachapi district was established by the state in hopes of preserving wilderness and wildlife near the

rapidly growing high desert and the San Joaquin Valley. It is hoped the new Lancaster-based district will help with planning issues, focusing on conservation.

Edwards Air Force Base's effort to protect young desert tortoises was among the programs highlighted at the event. Young tortoises are being kept in pens in an isolated area of the base to keep them away from predators, such as ravens, and allow them to mature.

"Hopefully we can release them back into the population," said base biologist Mark Hagan.

The U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife highlighted a program aimed at partnering with private landowners to preserve natural areas. Fish and Wildlife estimates that 73 percent of the nation's land is held under private ownership.

"It's not enough to try to restore species on public lands," said Mary Root, coordinator for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. "We provide technical and financial assistance to owners who want to enhance or restore their property."

The program has worked with about 800 landowners in California, but so far none has been in the Antelope Valley. Root hopes to start such a local effort in the coming year.

Jack Farley of the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department talked about the desert's subtle beauty.

"People come here and they think it's just a chunk of land - it's just desert. You have to educate them," Farley said. "If you go out in the morning or in the evening, you can see wildlife. If you go out in the day, the animals are hiding because they are smart."

Wendy Reed, a director of the Antelope Valley Conservancy, highlighted simple things people can do to help habitat and wildlife, such as properly disposing of trash, keeping lids on trash cans to keep ravens away and staying on trails.

Endangered Species Day, first observed last year, is aimed at educating the public about the importance of protecting rare, threatened and endangered animal and plant species. The event is also a chance to highlight efforts by organizations and individuals to protect wildlife, fish and plants.

james.skeen@dailynews (661) 267-5743



Caption: About 80 year old Tyrone, one of the tortoises Ton(cq)Jones of Ton Reptile Rescue & Rehabilitation of Lancaster brought to the Endangered Species Day Press Conference at the Prim Desert Woodlands in Lancaster on Friday. (Jeff Goldwater/Staff Photographer)

