

## **NEEDS AND NEWS**

### **DONATIONS**

The Institute does not accept memberships however we actively are requesting financial support for specific projects. Frequently we use donations to apply for matching grant funds. The Institute is a nonprofit 501 3c organization and donations are tax deductible.

Current projects in need of support:

Funding for URTD ELISA tests as part of the Institutes Study on the spread of URTD in wild populations of Gopher Tortoises. Tests are \$38 each.

METAL DETECTOR to be used in our Heritage Collection studies on behavior of tortoises being maintained in semi-wild conditions. This allows us to locate tortoises (with a metal disk attached to the shell), without disturbing the cover under which it has buried. Cost, approximately \$400.

ULTRA SOUND EQUIPMENT- We need to evaluate female tortoises in both gopher tortoise and Heritage Collection populations to determine the status of egg clutches. Frequently Doctor's offices and clinics and Veterinary Centers trade in older models for newer ones. As long as it works, we certainly could use it.

BINOCULAR DISSECTING SCOPE-We need this scope for work with plant identifications, invertebrate work and husbandry work on tortoises.

USED VEHICLE-Our resident research director and interns do not have vehicles available to them (many are from other countries) and we need one for them to travel to town for supplies and errands. Note this vehicle should be a pick up or similar type that has high clearance and can handle the 5.5 miles sand and limerock road.

ASSISTANTSHIPS AND FIELD TECHNICAN SUPPORT –The Institute attempts to have two interns or assistantships available throughout the year. An average cost of an assistantship is approximately \$16,000 per year. Internships usually are 3 months in length and the support needed for one is \$2500.

INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOL FOR CHELONIAN RELOCATION AND HERITAGE COLLECTIONS-Although we have received many donations for this effort, we still need several thousand dollars to assist with the final development of the publication and supporting the Roundtable.

## **THANKS FOR YOUR HELP AND DONATIONS**

The Institute's greatest donation came from Peter Warny, of New York. Peter has purchased 80 acres next to the Institute's Property and has turned over the use and management of the property to the Institute.

Curt Harbsmeier, attorney and member of the board from Lakeland, our accountant, Don Powell of Gainesville for successfully steering us through the federal nonprofit application, state permits for soliciting funds, and working with the Tax Assessor's office in working through the conservation easement.

Craig Guyer, professor at Auburn University brought some equipment for the Institute to use in studying tortoise to tortoise interactions at the tortoise burrows. Also, Dave Rostal, South Georgia University, has deposited data recorders at various gopher tortoise burrows on the Preserve to gather data to compare with his various study sites where he is looking at gopher tortoise reproductive biology. We hope to cooperate with these and other researchers in the future.

The Institute wishes to thank Lori Green of Turtle Homes and Nori Oshima for their help in creating the Institute's Home Page.

The Institute wishes to thank the Central Florida Zoo and David Lee for providing tortoises for additional work on Heritage Collections.

We also want to thank the many individuals and the Gopher Tortoise Council for donating funds for the development of the International Protocol for Chelonian Relocation and Heritage Collections and the September Roundtable to discuss the Protocol.

## **CURRENT NEWS FOR FALL 2000**

Nori Oshima, Yale Student and resident of Japan completed an internship at the Institute. Nori spent hundreds of hours in a perch 15 ft. above the *Geochelone elegans* (Star Tortoise) pens studying social behavior, movements and microhabitat use and how environmental conditions may affect behavior. This is part of the Institute's study on how much space and what is the density of tortoises within that space can allow the tortoises to behave in a normal fashion.

Ghislaine Guyot, Research Director, Ray and Patricia Ashton have all been working on and writing sections of the International Protocol and encouraging (harassing) co-chairs to complete their chapters so they can be distributed at the September Roundtable.

The staff has been contracted by Kreiger Publishing Company to produce the *HANDBOOK OF GOPHER TORTOISE MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES*.

Ray Ashton attended the USDA sponsored symposium on Tortoises, Ticks, and the Reptile Trade in Tallahassee last month. Stemming from this meeting, the Institute as produced a conceptual plan for the development of a Tortoise Clearing House for Tortoises Confiscated by FWS. This project ties into efforts to establish Heritage Collection Complexes and the Institute is working with Conservation International and other organizations in developing funding.

### **Land Conservation Activities**

Watermelon Pond CARL Lands Management-Ray Ashton reviewed and commented on the Florida Department of Forestry's Goethe State Forest Five Year Management Plan. This plan included the management of Watermelon Pond CARL lands. The comments related to the fact that no biological survey work had been done, the DOF wishes to plant up to 600 acres after destroying outstanding upland habitat, there were no studies or efforts to evaluate human use impacts and there were no efforts to eliminate poaching and other illegal activities on the property. These concerns will be presented to the State Lands Advisory Commission at the public hearing.

Ray Ashton has been serving on the Land Conservation Advisory Commission and Chairman of the Counties Recreation and Open Space Advisory Commission. Along with Curt Harbsmeier, board member, we have been working on recommendations to the County and state on providing tax incentives for landowners who wish to protect natural habitats on their property. The LCAC has made recommendations to the County Commission on land acquisition (a referendum will be on the ballot in November) and to adopt a Blue Belt Policy, which should come up for a vote in this next quarter.

The Institute is working to obtain conservation agreements with 5 additional neighbors to insure that natural habitats are managed thus helping sustain gopher tortoise, Indigo snake and other species. We are also working with the State Public Lands to expand the Watermelon Pond CARL lands boundary to include the Institute and surrounding 300 acres of critical upland habitat.

HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AT THE ROUNDTABLE IN SEPTEMBER!