

Pima County 2011 Tortoise Survey

Purpose of the Tortoise Survey

Pima County is looking for information to improve its model of potentially suitable habitat for the Sonoran desert tortoise. We are interested in observations of live or dead tortoises. Observations will be used to refine the assumptions of the model.



Photo by Don Swann

If you are willing to contribute locations where you have observed a wild tortoise, please visit Arizona HerpCount (www.herpcount.org). HerpCount observations will require latitude, longitude, a photograph and a date. If you would prefer to contribute location data to Pima County directly, please email Neva Connolly at conservation@pima.gov. Please do not touch or harass live tortoises!

Background on the Tortoise

The Sonoran desert tortoise is widespread across many low elevation areas of Pima County where rocky outcrops, incised washes, and bajadas occur.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on December 13, 2010 that the Sonoran desert tortoise warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act, but is precluded from imminent federal protection by the need to address higher-priority species. The Sonoran desert tortoise was named a priority vulnerable species of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan because of the threats to the tortoise and mounting evidence of its decline in the region. The county has proposed to mitigate impacts to tortoise habitat under its Multi-Species Conservation Plan.

For more information on the Sonoran desert tortoise, visit these sites:

Arizona Sonora Desert Museum

http://www.desertmuseum.org/programs/tap_tortnathistory.php

Arizona Game and Fish Turtle/Tortoise Identification

http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/turtleID_chart.shtml