



# The Sonoran Desert Tortoise on the Barry M. Goldwater Range East



The 56<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Luke AFB and the Range Management Office are committed to preserving native wildlife on the Barry M. Goldwater Range East. This includes the Sonoran Desert tortoise whose numbers have declined across much of its range in recent years. The Commander, 56<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, recently signed the “Candidate Conservation Agreement for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*) in Arizona.” This document, cosigned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, AZ Game and Fish Department, and numerous federal agencies describes specific conservation measures that the US Air Force will implement to ensure the tortoise’s continued survival on the Goldwater Range and the rest of Arizona.

The Sonoran Desert tortoise occurs throughout much of the Goldwater Range, but is most abundant in that part of the range east of State Route 85. This includes the Area B and Bender Spring public use areas where tortoises are regularly observed, especially in the spring and monsoon seasons. We ask for your help in preserving healthy populations of this iconic desert species.

## Things you can do:

- Only drive on open roads.
- Watch for tortoises during warm seasons and avoid running over them.
- Report sightings to the 56<sup>th</sup> Range Management Office biologists.\* Provide the GPS coordinates or the nearest road intersection number, as well as a photo if you have one. This will help us identify areas of the range that are important for tortoises.
- Do not collect or handle tortoises. Sonoran Desert tortoises are protected by Arizona state law. Convictions for collection may result in steep fines and/or jail sentences. Handling tortoises may expose them to diseases. Also, tortoises commonly void their bladders when disturbed, and this can put them at significant risk of dehydration.



Radio-transmitter for movement studies



Hatchling Tortoise

For more information about tortoise biology and regulations, visit this web page:  
<http://azgfdportal.az.gov/wildlife/nongamemanagement/tortoise/>

\* Sightings can be reported to: telephone (623) 856-7216 / E-mail [56RMO.Public.Affairs@us.af.mil](mailto:56RMO.Public.Affairs@us.af.mil)