

Waiting for Tortoises

by Eileen A Greiss

A Giant Galápagos Tortoise

can live for many years.

This tortoise was a
resident in the Australia

Zoo. When she died in

June, 2006, she was

just shy of her

176th birthday.



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Look, Mommy,” cried Alyssa. “That big desert tortoise is back, and look how silly it’s acting. What’s wrong with it?”

Alyssa’s mother looked out the patio window facing the Arizona desert. She saw one of several tortoises that frequented their yard. It was moving in circles and kicking up dirt at the entrance to one of two dens the tortoises had dug under a large woodpile.

“Oh,” said Alyssa’s mother, smiling, “It looks like a female getting ready to lay eggs.”

“Eggs?” exclaimed Alyssa. “She’s not a bird. How can she lay eggs?”

“Well,” her mother replied, “birds aren’t the only ones of God’s creatures that lay eggs. Reptiles lay eggs too.”

“What are reptiles?”

“There are a lot of different reptiles,” said her mother. “Snakes, lizards, water turtles, and desert tortoises like our friends here, are all reptiles. They not only lay eggs, but they’re also cold-blooded. They are warmed or cooled by the temperature of the ground or air around them. That’s why they stay in their underground dens in the hot part of the summer days and come out to eat and wander around in the early morning and late evening when it’s cooler.”

“But, Mommy, how do they stay warm in the winter?”

“The same way they stay cool in the summer. The warmer earth in their dens protects them from the colder winter air.”

“God sure made them smart, didn’t He, Mommy?”

“Yes, dear, He created them with instincts to go into dens for protection,” she replied. “Look, Alyssa, what’s happened while we talked. She seems to have her nest just about ready.” They quietly moved a little closer. “See how she’s reaching down as far as she can with her back feet and pushing the dirt out of the hole?” Alyssa and her mother watched the mother tortoise for a while longer.

Suddenly Alyssa exclaimed, “Mommy, look! A ping-pong ball! Where did that come from?”

Her mother laughed. “Yes, it does look like a ping-pong ball, but it’s actually one of her eggs. She’ll lay several more.”

They watched patiently as one by one, the big tortoise dropped the rest of her eggs into the nest. When she finished, she pushed all the loose dirt back into the hole. When it was completely covered, she sat on top of her nest and rested.

“Mommy,” asked Alyssa, “how will the baby turtles ever get out of that hole, and long will we have to wait?”

“Well, let’s see, Alyssa. It’s the end of May now. About the time you go back to school in September, the little tortoises will break through the eggshells and dig their way out of the dirt.”

“Is the mommy tortoise going to sit on the nest all summer? That’s a long, long time, and won’t she get awfully hot?”

“She’ll probably stay around the nest for the rest of today, and from then on the desert sun will keep the soil warm in the shallow nest. The babies will grow inside the shells and hatch without further help from her. When they do hatch, they will still be on their own.”

“How sad,” said Alyssa. “Won’t their mother or father even feed them or dig them a den to live in?”

“No,” said Mother. “God has made them so they can take care of themselves completely from the day they hatch. More than likely they will stay in the same den or one nearby.”

Alyssa and her parents waited all summer as the baby tortoises developed inside their shells. As September approached, Alyssa checked the nest every day. Finally, on the very Saturday before she was to return to school, she ran into the house shouting, “Mommy! Daddy! Come out into the

continued on page 19



This
**Desert
Tortoise**

is an albino. Behind it
you can see one that has
normal coloration.

Creation Close-ups



One morning while making breakfast, Mom cracked this unusual egg. We have enclosed a picture that we took of the unusual egg and a normal egg. We have often seen double-yoked eggs; however, this is our first time seeing a white-yolked egg. What a fun conversation during breakfast! We wonder: Might this have become an albino chicken?

The Franklin Children: Benjamin, 7; Stephen, 6; James, 4 Billings, Montana



We have a dusk-to-dawn light that moths come to. In the morning they are still lying on our lane. There were all different species of silkworm moths.

We saw polyphemus, luna, cecropia, and others. Luna moths were the most plentiful. Most had a wingspan of more than 5 inches. I never saw so many moths before.

Jason Oberholtzer, Denver, PA



This is a hermit thrush nest near our home in Alaska.

Silas Firth, 10 Anchor Point, AK



This is a praying mantis we found on our back porch. It was hard to see because of his camouflage.

Katie Parris, 10 Travelers Rest, SC



I found this fungus in our neighbor's woods. It was HUGE! The measurement was about 15 inches. The stem was 6-7 inches. It lasted about one week and then it shrivelled up and died. It felt like very hard foam. Notice that it has white around the edges. Can anyone tell me what kind it is?

Timothy Flemming, 11 Shippensburg, PA

Busy Bees



Mark Brubaker, 16 Gardners, PA

*Do you have your own pictures you want to share with other readers? Write a little about each picture and send to **Creation Close-ups**, 4253 Woodcock Lane, Dayton, VA 22821, or e-mail to creationclose-ups@naturefriendmagazine.com. Include your name and address. If you want your work returned (whether we use it or not), please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.*

WAITING FOR TORTOISES

continued from page 17

yard. I saw a tiny hole in the ground right where the mommy tortoise laid her eggs. I think the babies are coming out!”

They hurried outside. Sure enough, the hole above the nest gradually grew larger. They saw tiny feet and a tiny head, and finally one little tortoise climbed out of the hole and scurried off. By the end of the morning, all the babies were out—six altogether.

“Can’t I please feed them?” begged Alyssa jumping up and down. “They must be hungry after being in there all summer.”

“Don’t worry about them,” said Father. “The babies get enough nourishment from the inside of their eggs to last them for a couple of days after hatching. By that time they will have found their own feeding grounds.”

“I can hardly believe,” exclaimed Alyssa, “how fast they can walk already, just like the big tortoises.”

“God created some animals to take care of themselves from birth. Others need to be fed by their

parents for a while. God’s plans for these tortoises are for them to take care of themselves.”

“Oh,” said Alyssa thoughtfully. “But may I at least hold them?”

“Just one,” said Mother, “and only for a short time. We want to let them follow their instincts to take care of themselves.”

Alyssa carefully picked up one by the sides of its shell. She felt its tiny toenails gently explore the palm of her hand. “It’s looking at me,” she said. “I think it likes me.”

She softly stroked the side of the tortoise’s face before reluctantly setting it back on the ground. She hugged her mother and father. “It’s really been fun seeing the mommy lay her eggs and watching the babies finally hatch.”

She smiled as she watched them begin their journey through life, exploring their part of the big desert for the first time. ◀



I am hard and I have no grace.
At times I move from

place to place.

I am around when it
is hot,

Lots of people me have sought.

I have killed thousands of mankind.

I have no mercy as you will find.

I am huge, but have different shapes.

I can be big or the size of grapes.

People have scarred me awful bad;

It seems to make them very glad.

Some people are world champions because of me.

I can be loud or quiet, you see.

I can lie on the ground, cover things up,

Or rise to the sky. God made me. What am I?

Answer on page 11

WHO am I?

Nate A. Hess, 13
Shady Grove, PA

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