

# Sleeping Cat Software

*Relax and enjoy!*

<http://www.sleepingcatsoftware.com/>

Thanks for trying **DeskPictRotater!**

*Release notes are at the bottom of this document.*

## **What Is It?**

It is an AppleScript that works with the desktop picture feature of MacOS 8 and higher to periodically randomly set your desktop picture during a session. Whew! That was a mouthful!

Please note that **two** scripts are provided. One supports MacOS 8.0 and 8.1, and the other is for 8.5 and beyond. Please read the release notes for more info.

When run for the first time, the script will prompt you for a folder containing the pictures you wish to use for your desktop (but see **Tips**, below). It's up to you to make sure that the folder contains only picture files; the script does not check file types (maybe in a future release). If the script is unable to set a file as the desktop picture, the default desktop pattern may be shown instead.

The folder you set is remembered across invocations of the script. To set a new folder, drag the folder you wish to use onto the script.

This script is most useful when set as a startup item. To do this, make an alias to the script, and place it in the **Startup Items** folder of your System folder.

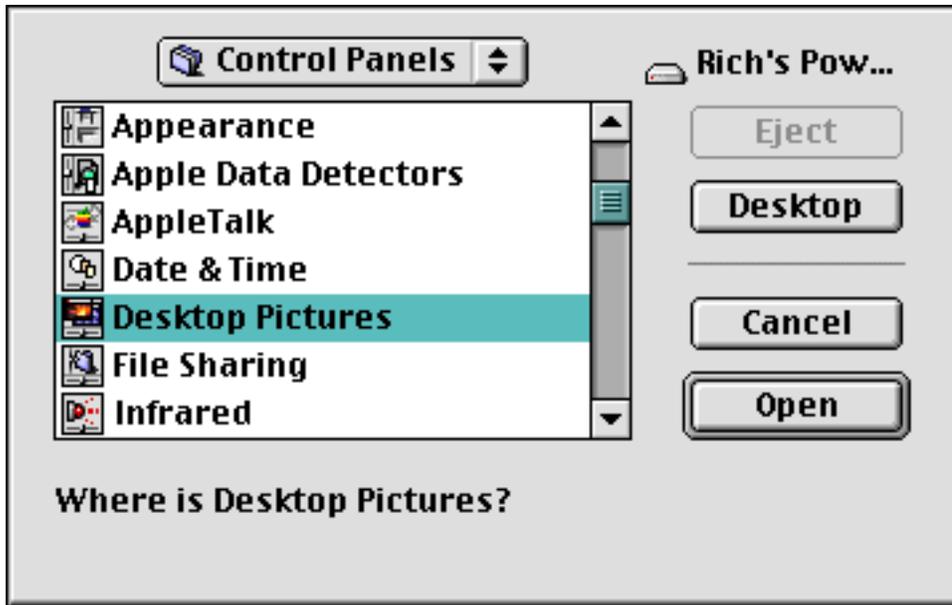
## Cool Features

- You can configure the script to be active only during certain hours, and you can include or exclude weekends. This is useful if you use energy saving software to spin down your hard drive.
- The script, as shipped, waits 15 minutes before setting a new picture. It uses an idle handler, as opposed to an increment loop or other similar method, so it should have minimal impact on CPU usage.
- The script remembers the last eight pictures set, and tries to avoid reusing recently set pictures.
- You can set a new folder of pictures by dragging it onto the script.
- It should gracefully handle having the picture folder disappear during a run.
- To maximize performance, the script leaves the Desktop Pictures control panel active, but will hide it after setting the picture.

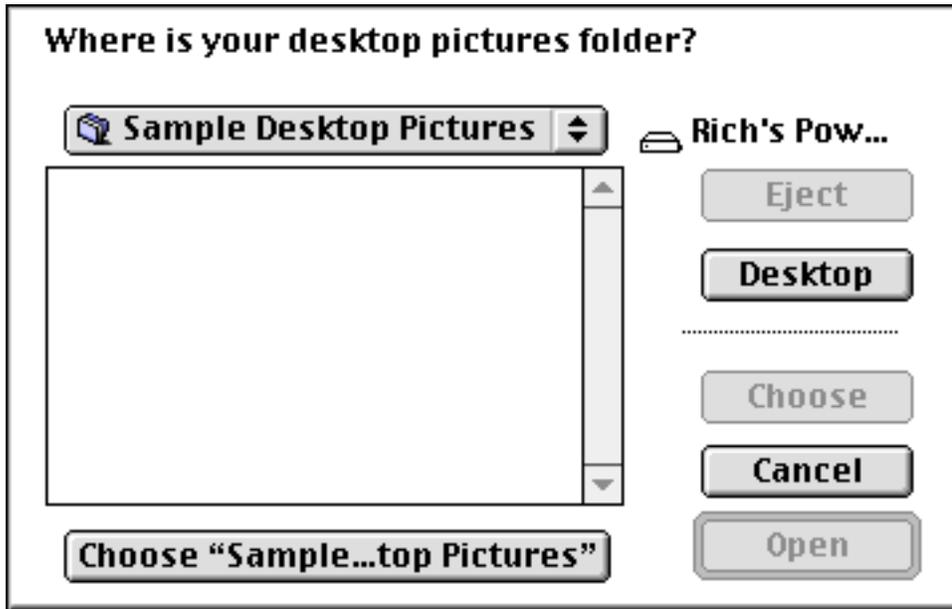
## Tips

When you start the script for the first time, you may see a Standard File dialog. Watch the wording of the prompt: it will be asking either for the Desktop Pictures or Appearance **control panel** or for the **folder** where your desktop pictures are located. You may see both dialogs in succession.

This is the dialog for selecting the Desktop Pictures **control panel** (a similar dialog would appear for the Appearance panel):



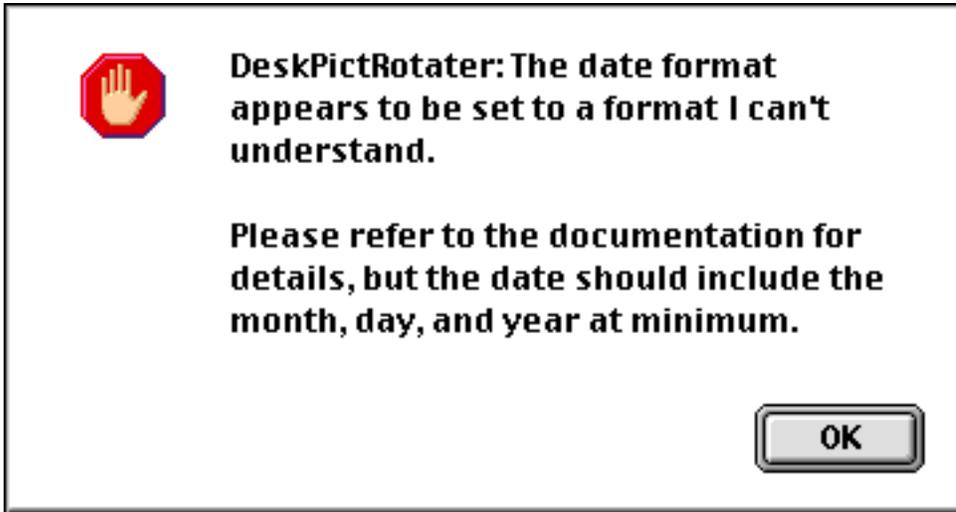
This is the dialog for selecting the **folder** of your desktop pictures. In this dialog, you should navigate so that the name of your picture folder is shown in the "Choose..." button, and then click that button.



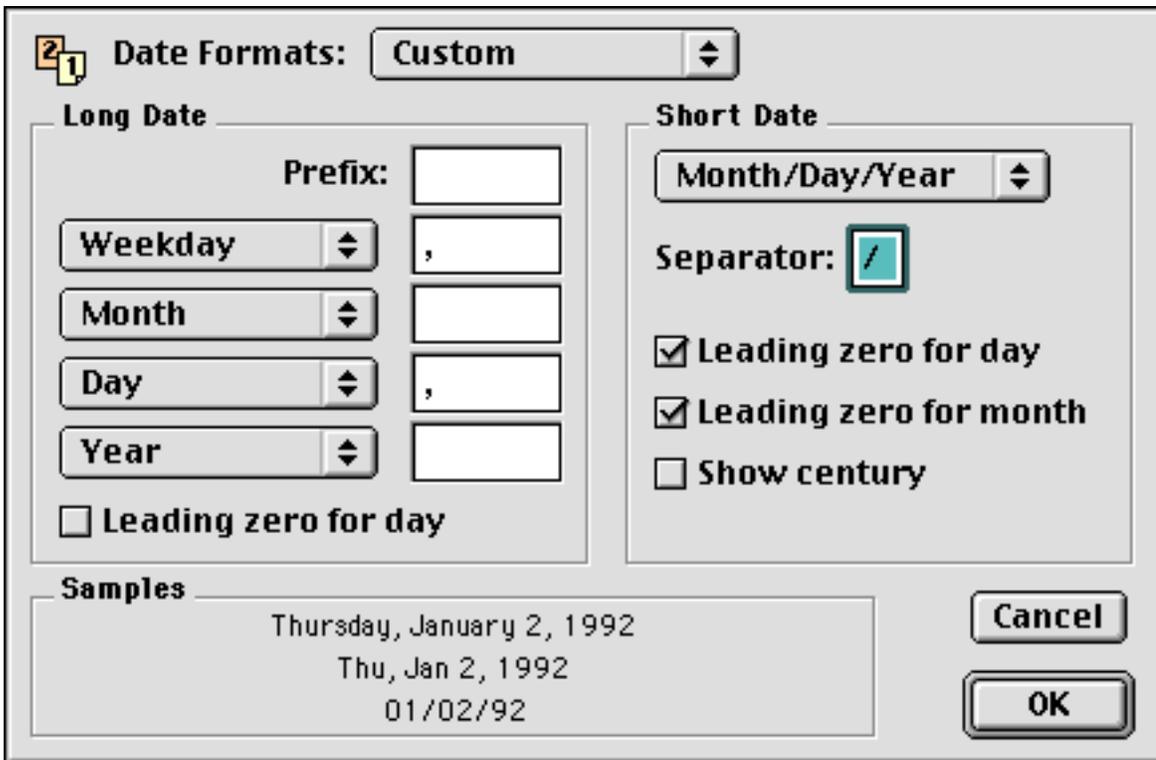
The contents of your desktop pictures folder should contain **only** pictures or aliases to pictures. Nested folders are not supported and will be ignored. If you have folders of desktop pictures, you could make a folder of aliases to the pictures you like, and point **DeskPictRotater** at that folder.

If you have a picture that you particularly like, and would like to see it often, make several aliases to the picture and place them in your desktop pictures folder. The more instances of (or aliases to) a picture, the greater the chance it will be picked.

**DeskPictRotater** uses the system date format when it is checking whether to run. Through the Date & Time control panel, you can extensively customize this format, but for the script to function, the long date string should include at least the month, day, and year. If it does not, you may see this alert:



To correct this, open the Date & Time control panel, and modify the long date settings as above. Here is how my system is set:



## Finding Pictures

**Here are some sites that have pictures for desktop use** (provided for convenience; no endorsement is implied):

The Scenery Channel:

<http://www-scenery.waa.wisc.edu/Scenery/html/Recent01.html>

Rachel Robbins' site:

[http://www.ezlink.com/~rachel/desktop\\_pics.html](http://www.ezlink.com/~rachel/desktop_pics.html)

GUI Junky:

[http://www.kindground.com/gui\\_junky/](http://www.kindground.com/gui_junky/)

MacAddict Reader Art Gallery:

<http://www.macaddict.com/gallery/gallery.html>

Macintosh Desktop Picture Archive

<http://www.transbay.net/~niko/Mac/>

Steve's Free DTP:

<http://www.steveweb.com/FreeDTP/>

## Customizing

There are things you can tweak in the script. See the following lines:

```
property activeStartTime : " 12:00 AM" -- start
property activeStopTime : " 11:59 PM" -- stop
property workingOnTheWeekend : true -- whether this script is active on Saturday and Sunday
-- change the following property to make quitDTP true if
-- you'd prefer to have the
-- Desktop Pictures application quit between picture changes.
-- This will worsen performance, but will save some memory.
property quitDTP : false
property minutesBetween : 15 -- time between picture changes
```

**activeStartTime** defines the time to start checking. **The leading space is significant.** Similarly, **activeStopTime** defines when to stop checking. If you want the script to be active all the time, set the start time to 12:00 AM and the stop time to 11:59 PM (this is the default).

**workingOnTheWeekend** is a boolean flag indicating whether the script is active on Saturday and Sunday. The default is true, but set it to false if you don't want desktop pictures changed on the weekend. The same start and stop time apply as during the week.

**quitDTP** is a boolean flag which you can set to indicate whether you'd prefer to have the Desktop Pictures/Appearance control panel quit between picture changes.

**minutesBetween** defines the number of minutes to wait between picture changes.

### What's the Point of the Start and Stop Time and Weekend Flag?

Changing desktop pictures requires disk access. If you have an energy saver that spins down your disk, you might not want the disk to be spun up when you're not there to enjoy the new desktop picture.

## What Do I Need?

- AppleScript. See <http://www.applescript.apple.com/> for general AppleScript information. My Web site (see below) also has AppleScript links on the developer page.
- MacOS 8 or higher. See <http://www.macos.apple.com/>
- An AppleScript script editor, if you wish to customize the script. Apple's editor, Script Editor, is distributed with AppleScript. Other editors are available; one source to check for these is Developer Depot at <http://www.devdepot.com/>.

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## Version History

10/97 v1.0 First public release.

11/97 v1.1 Added check for running between certain hours (and on weekends). Increased number of pictures remembered to 8 (from 3), and increased the number of times we'll try to find a unique picture to 5 (from 3).

11/97 v1.2 Remembers recently used pictures by name instead of by index in the picture folder. This allows the user to add/remove pictures during a run.

2/98 v1.3 Fixed miscellaneous instances where the script could time out. This could happen, for example, when the Finder has a modal dialog -- such as the notification that a server has gone down -- showing. The script remembers the used picture history across invocations (previously, it was cleared on script startup). Improved checking of items in the desktop pictures folder: folders are ignored, and aliases are checked for proper resolution (previously, a bad alias could cause a system hang). Improved wording of some prompts. Added a "tips" section to the documentation.

6/98 v1.3.1 Updated the documentation to clarify file selection dialog usage.

10/98 v1.4 Updated the documentation to add some desktop picture site URLs. Added script check for proper system date format, and added relevant section to documentation. Increased script memory allocation. Fixed bug where the script would not rotate pictures with a small number of pictures in the folder. Be more persistent when hiding the Desktop Pictures control panel at startup.

11/98 v1.5 Added MacOS 8.5 support, and split the script into separate versions for 8.0/8.1 and 8.5. In 8.5, Apple replaced the Desktop Pictures control panel with the Appearance control panel. I was unable to find a satisfactory way to support both panels in one script, particularly because I wanted to preserve the ability for the user to edit certain script settings. If this was attempted on one OS or the other, the user would always be asked to locate the missing control panel. If you have an idea for handling this, please contact me. I also added code to launch the control panel based on creator type. Revised documentation.

11/98 v1.5.1 Revised documentation.

12/98 v1.5.2 Updated documentation to reflect new contact information.

2/99 v1.5.3 (8.5+ only) Changed method of launching the control panel, for better 8.5 compatibility.

12/99 v1.5.4 (8.5+), v1.5.3 (8.0+) Corrected bug where if the option (quitDTP) was set to quit the control panel between changes, the Finder would be quit instead!

10/2000 v1.5.5 Updated contact info.