We prove that if $G$ is a finitely generated abelian group of orientation preserving $C^1$ diffeomorphisms of $R^2$ which leaves invariant a compact set then there is a common fixed point for all elements of $G$. We also show that if $G$ is any abelian subgroup of orientation preserving $C^1$ diffeomorphisms of $S^2$ then there is a common fixed point for all elements of a subgroup of $G$ with index at most two. (Received September 26, 2005)