



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Erin Scott  
Sr., Manager Marketing & PR  
760-346-5694

[escott@livingdesert.org](mailto:escott@livingdesert.org)

**PHOTO ATTACHED**

**LET SPRING BEGIN! MOJAVE MAXINE EMERGES AT THE LIVING DESERT**

*Student Contest Winners will Receive Gift Certificates & Mojave Maxine T-shirts*

**PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS, CA** – (January 30, 2019) – It appears Spring is on its way as Mojave Maxine emerged from brumation (reptilian hibernation) yesterday, January 29, at 8:38 a.m. at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens.

While the east coast has Punxsutawney Phil and Groundhog Day to let them know when they can expect spring, The Living Desert has Mojave Maxine to signify that warmer weather is on the way. With valley temperatures near the 80's this week, it seems Maxine is an excellent predictor of spring in the desert.

"Typically Maxine emerges in February, but the last two years she has made an earlier debut at the end of January," said Sarah Greely, Field Conservation Coordinator at The Living Desert. "2018 turned out to be a very warm year and perhaps she's letting us know 2019 will follow suit."

This year's contest included a record number of 1,925 entries from students from Inyo, Imperial, San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Ventura, and Kern counties participated in the contest to guess the date and time that Mojave Maxine would emerge. The first entry received from each county that is closest to the exact day and time wins a \$50 gift certificate, a Federal Lands Pass, a visit from a desert tortoise, Mojave Maxine t-shirts for their entire class and a \$100 gift certificate for their teacher.

"This contest is a fun way to educate children on conservation and animal behaviors, as it relates to desert tortoises," said Greely. "It's exciting to see the number of entries grow each year and we know the children and teachers love the prizes too."

Mojave Maxine is a desert tortoise that lives at The Living Desert and will celebrate her 42nd birthday in April. Each year, she retires for the winter to her underground burrow and stays there in a state of brumation for several months. Mojave Maxine emerges in early spring as the warm days begin to arrive in the desert, promising fresh flowers, a favorite meal for the desert tortoise.

For more information, visit [www.LivingDesert.org](http://www.LivingDesert.org) or call 760-346-5694.

**About the Living Desert:**

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit, accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, ensuring the highest standards of all aspects of animal care, education, conservation, public service, and operations. The Zoo is active in conservation research, habitat protection, breeding programs and education initiatives around the world, as well as in its own community. The Zoo has been a top attraction in the Palm Springs area for nearly 50 years. The Living Desert is located at 47900 Portola Ave, Palm Desert, CA 92260. For more information: (760) 346-5694 or visit [livingdesert.org](http://livingdesert.org).

###