



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHOTOS ATTACHED

VIDEO LINK: <https://youtu.be/O1ROW1-qjpw>

**THE LIVING DESERT'S AFRICAN WILD DOG PUPPIES
ARE HEALTHY AND THRIVING AT ONE MONTH OLD**
The six puppies received their first well-baby exam today

PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS, CA -- (May 24, 2019) -- The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is excited to share that all six puppies, born April 24, 2019 are healthy and thriving. Today, May 24th, the animal care and veterinary teams performed a routine well-baby exam and learned there are five male puppies and one female in the litter.

The yet-to-be-named puppies are the first litter for parents, Beatrix and Kiraka (ker-ah-kuh). Since their birth, this is the first time that the four-week-old puppies have had any interaction with the animal care team. African wild dogs, also known as painted dogs, have a very complex pack and social structure. It is recommended by the Species Survival Plan (SSP) to maintain a hands-off approach, which allows the critical bonding and development to happen as naturally as possible.

"At one month old, we felt confident that the litter had bonded with their mother and were ready for their well-baby exam," said Dr. Christine Higbie, Associate Veterinarian at The Living Desert. "All of the puppies are progressing and developing as expected, and have really grown since their birth. They should begin to venture out of the den very soon."

The puppies, born with their eyes closed, have grown more coordinated and all weigh between 1.88kgs to 2.26kgs (4.1 – 5 lbs.). Around five to six weeks old, they will begin to venture out of the den, and will be visible to guests. At that age, they will also begin to wean and start eating meat.

"We are so happy to learn that the puppies are healthy," said Allen Monroe, President and CEO of The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. "Beatrix has done an outstanding job caring for her puppies, and we are excited to continue watching them grow."

Following the well-baby exam, the puppies were returned to the den, rubbed with dirt to eliminate the human smell, and then reunited with their mom. The animal care and veterinary teams will continue to closely monitor the family's activity through den cameras which allow Beatrix and the puppies plenty of space, comfort, and security.

Currently listed as endangered by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), African wild dog populations number fewer than 5,000 individuals. As one of the most endangered African carnivores, African wild dog populations are struggling and in decline due to human-wildlife conflict, habitat destruction and canine diseases, like distemper and rabies. The Living Desert supports specific African wild dog conservation projects that work to bolster wild populations. Beatrix, Kiraka and the newest additions are part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) SSP, which enables a healthy, genetically diverse, and self-sustaining population of species in human care.

For continued Pupdates, video, and photos, visit online at LivingDesert.org/Pupdate.

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.

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