



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STUDENTS INVITED TO PREDICT WHEN MOJAVE MAXINE
WILL MAKE HER 2020 DEBUT AT THE LIVING DESERT**

Winners in each county will receive gift certificates and other prizes

PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS, CA – (January 6, 2020) – At The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, Mojave Maxine, a 42-year old desert tortoise, determines the arrival of spring. Each year, students in grades K-12 from nine counties throughout Southern California are invited to predict when Mojave Maxine will emerge from her brumation (hibernation for reptiles) and make her first appearance of 2020, indicating longer, warmer days are on the way.

Maxine and her fellow desert tortoises typically enter brumation around Thanksgiving. Their bodies know when to go to sleep based on the outside temperatures and the change in daylight hours. Sometime in the coming months, she will awaken from her long winter's slumber and emerge from her subterranean burrow at The Living Desert. The exact date of this annual occurrence, however, is anyone's guess.

The first entry received from each county that is closest to the exact day and time wins a \$50 gift certificate, a classroom visit from a desert tortoise, Mojave Maxine t-shirts for their entire class and a \$100 gift certificate for their teacher. Students from Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties are invited to participate in the contest.

"Mojave Maxine is a great ambassador for The Living Desert and each year she helps educate countless people as to the peril of the threatened desert tortoise," said Dr. James Danoff-Burg, Director of Conservation. "This annual contest is a fun way to get students involved and it gives them the opportunity to learn how to help protect this species."

In 2019, more than 1,900 students submitted predictions prior to Maxine's star-studded arrival on January 29 at 8:38 a.m.

The guessing contest is currently open and will run until Mojave Maxine emerges from her burrow. A live video feed will be available online to watch for when Mojave Maxine appears. To enter visit livingdesert.org/mojave-maxine.

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 destination in the Palm Springs area for 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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