



For Release: April 21, 2009

Contact: Anne Staley (760) 367-5528,
Desert Managers Group, Desert Tortoise Outreach Coordinator

2009 Mojave Max Emergence Contest Winner Imperial County

The 2009 Mojave Max Contest winner for Imperial County is Catherine Ross. Catherine was one of over 800 students who went on-line to enter this year's contest. She attends Desiree Lynne Bumbera's (3) grade class at Ben Hulse Elementary School in Imperial. Catherine guessed February 13 at 11:23 a.m. Max's official emergence time was February 24 at 1:52 p.m. Catherine and her classmates will receive Mojave Max T-shirts and a pizza party. Mrs. Bumbera and Catherine will also receive gift certificates.

The object of the contest is to guess when Mojave Max will emerge from her burrow for the first time after a long winter sleep (brumation). In the fall, when the weather turns cold desert tortoises brumate, a reptilian form of hibernation. As temperatures warm in spring, tortoises become active and feed on wildflowers and other annual desert plants.

This is the first year California has had its own Mojave Max to mark the beginning of spring. California's Mojave Max resides at The Living Desert in Palm Desert California. The Living Desert is a 360-acre wilderness preserve dedicated solely to interpreting and conserving the deserts of the world. The Mojave Max Emergence Contest originally began in Nevada as a way for the public to learn about desert tortoises and what can be done to help this threatened species. In 2005 the Desert Managers Group began a California version of the Mojave Max Emergence Contest. The Desert Managers Group and the staff at the Living Desert hope to increase understanding about how desert ecosystems work and especially how the desert tortoise and other native species are affected when ecosystems are altered.

For more desert tortoise media information including news stories, press releases, newsletters, and public service announcements go to: <http://www.deserttortoise.gov/information/news.aspx>

For Desert Managers Group information, go to <http://www.dmg.gov>
For The Living Desert information, go to <http://www.livingdesert.org/>
For Joshua Tree National Park, go to: <http://www.nps.gov/jotr>