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DESERT ADVENTURE The Wildlife Adventure

The Living Desert (www.livingdesert.org) in Palm Desert, Indian Wells showcases the desert as an interesting ecosystem with remarkable plants, animals, places and natural phenomena. This vast enterprise includes a zoo and endangered species conservation center, botanical gardens, natural history museum, wilderness park, nature preserve and education center.

Several animals and plants at The Living Desert are threatened species or in danger of extinction. Many of them are reproducing under carefully managed programs.

The Living Desert is also one of the most successful zoological parks in the country and offers visitors the most complete introduction to the natural desert. The organization is dedicated to preserving not only plant and animal life of deserts from around the world but also educating the public through interpretive exhibits, programs and publications.

The name of the “local” desert, Colorado, comes from the Colorado River, which is its eastern boundary. Just north in this location - the Coachella Valley –is the Mojave Desert. Average elevation of the Colorado Desert is about 1,000 feet: the Mojave has an elevation of 2,000 to 4,000 feet.

The Living Desert provides an introduction to desert ecology to more than 4,000 school children each year through its on-site and outreach programs. Youth tours include storytelling, small animal encounters, Wildlife Wonders Show, Village WaTuTu, hands-on Discovery Room and a desert play land –Gecko Gulch.

The site of the Leadership 100 Conference -The Desert Springs JW Marriott Resort & Spa- is also home to an abundant wildlife population, including an extensive avian collection, many of which are only one or two generations away from their jungle ancestors.

Gracing the 23 acres of lakes and waterways surrounding Desert Springs Resort & Spa is a range of water fowl. Undoubtedly the most beautiful are the thirty-two Chilean Flamingos, whose distinctive pink coloring is derived from their consumption of algae, shrimp, mollusks, and insect larvae. These Flamingos are fed a diet to keep them healthy and radiant. Nine black swans and four white swans are given free range of the property, but prefer to stay close to the water. Amid the flamingos and swans is the ever increasing population of ducks, which includes six species ranging from ringed neck teals to black billed whistlers.

Swimming contentedly below the surface of the water is a community of Koi, Comet, Large Mouth Bass and Channel Cat fish.

Word of Desert Spring's animal friendly reputation has apparently spread throughout the migrating bird population. Each year Canadian Geese, Coots, Egrets, and Green Heron use the resort's grounds as a resting stop along their annual migration. And naturally, the resort is only too happy to accommodate these weary world travelers (one snow goose has taken residence)!

Desert Springs Resort & Spa is also home to the largest saltwater aquarium in the Coachella Valley. All the fish are tropical, warm water varieties that thrive on a diet of shrimp, krill or lettuce. Some of the more exotic denizens of the deep include a dog faced puffer, squirrel fish, lunare wrasse, unicorn tang, zebra eel, and a nurse shark.