



# The Desert Sun

SERVING THE COACHELLA VALLEY SINCE 1927

SATURDAY  
December 4, 2004

## ALIVE, AT HOME



Bob Cat



Collard Javelina

## IN OUR DESERT



Coyote



Mountain Lion

PHOTOS BY WALTER BYRNE, THE DESERT SUN

### Book stars many residents of Living Desert

By RICHARD GUZMAN  
THE DESERT SUN

**R**adar the coyote lounges in a patch of sun to catch some heat. Gomez and Morticia, a committed vulture couple, groom each other tenderly.

Gregory the javelina snorts loudly and marks his territory as visitors to The Living Desert and Zoo Gardens admire the pig-like animal.

They don't realize it as they go about their daily routines, but the animals are among the who's who of a new book that highlights the diverse and numerous species

Please see DESERT, D5



### The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens

Address: 47-900 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert  
For more information: 346-5694

#### Don't miss

**WildLights:** More than 260,000 twinkling lights illuminate the park throughout the holiday season.

Animals, holiday scenes and plants are depicted with the lights.

**When:** 6-9 p.m. this

weekend and Dec. 10-23, Dec. 26-Jan. 2

**Where:** The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert, 346-5694

**How much:** \$6.75 for adults, \$5 children ages 3-12, \$5.50 Living Desert members.

### Desert

Continued from D5  
that call the desert home.

Written and illustrated by Arizona writer Brooke Bessesen, "Look Who Lives in the Desert!" makes it clear that despite appearing barren and inhospitable to some, the Southwest desert is bursting with animal life.

"A lot of people are very surprised to find that these animals are just outside their door and they have been living here for thousands of

years," Bessesen said.

The book, which is being sold at The Living Desert, highlights 20 animals that live in the desert through colorful illustrations and informative facts.

Many of the animals in the book, like the coyote and vulture, are found right here in the Coachella Valley, said Marcia Fisher, public relations manager for The Living Desert.

Of the 150 species of animals housed at the park, about half are native to the desert, Fisher said.

One of the important aspects of the book, Bessesen said, is that it can help familiarize people with animals they may otherwise think of as intimidating.

"It's important for people to read and learn about animals and why these animals are here and the importance of having animals here," Fisher said.

Radar, who is the leader of a pack of three coyotes at the Living Desert, was born and raised at the park. He has companions, Trapper and Hawkeye, two orphaned coyotes rescued from the wild, have adapted well to life together.

As she wiggles her keys from behind the fence of their enclosure, Radar shows his lead-

ership skills.

He quickly stands and trots toward the fence.

"They associate the sound of keys with food," she said.

Suddenly, an either unsuspecting or very brave quail, strolls into the coyote's enclosure, pecking at the ground for food.

After a few seconds, while Trapper and Hawkeye continue to sleep, Radar focuses his stare on the bird.

He begins to move closer, as a crowd of Living Desert visitors watches in anticipation.

But the quail spots the coyote and quickly scatters out of there through the chain link fence.

"They are all wild, they're not pets, but they do have their own personalities," Fisher said of the animals at the Living Desert.

One of the biggest personalities belongs to 19-year-old Reno, the oldest known mountain lion in captivity.

Fisher said mountain lions can sometimes be seen as low as the valley floor but usually live in mountainous regions like the top of the tramway.

Along with his roommate, Sedona, a younger mountain lion, Reno is one of the most popular residents at the Living Desert.

"Last year we had nearly 100 people here for his birthday party," Fisher said.