

Young Explorers
Classroom Program
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revised 02/23/99 and 1/10/01

Grade: Kindergarten and first grade

Subject: Animals of the Mojave Desert

Theme: The harsh conditions of the desert have created animals with a wide range of shapes, textures, colors, and sizes.

Goal: Understand that desert animals have similarities and differences.

Objectives: Students will be able to name and describe 5 desert animals.
Students will compare properties of desert animals.

Curriculum:

Math (1)2.1 Observe, sort, categorize objects, size, shapes, colors of animals

Math (1)3.1 Compare the properties of objects, communicate similarities/differences

Science (1) 6.3 Make observations/descriptions

Science (1) 2.2 Use the five senses to investigate natural world

Background: Although at first glance the desert seems to have little in the way of wildlife, it actually contains large diverse populations. Harsh desert conditions such as high temperatures, scarcity of water, constant winds, and lack of soil nutrients have forced animals to adapt to the conditions. Each animal has special adaptations and each fills an important niche in the desert ecosystem.

By studying desert animals a variety of specializations can be seen. For example, jackrabbits have large ears to radiate heat. Blood vessels in their ears are located just under the skin, and air flowing around them cools the blood. Birds pant to regulate their temperature. Big horn sheep have short shiny fur to reflect heat.

Key Points: Animals living in the desert have many different sizes, shapes, colors, weight, and textures. These characteristics help them survive in the desert.

Desert is more than one color.

Discuss colors of animal coverings similar to the colors of the desert.

Animals size and shape fit the habitat they live in.

Texture of animals coverings and other items found in the desert vary.

Discuss specific animal adaptations

Discuss differences in animals.

Vocabulary: desert: an area of land that is hot, dry, and gets very little water
adaptation - a physical or behavioral change that helps animals survive in the desert.
texture: the way the surface of an object feels

Activities: The ranger will introduce different properties of objects (e.g., size, shape, color, weight, texture). Then, by playing a game, students will observe and compare five different desert animals. Students will get to see a live desert tortoise (season permitting- if it is winter they may be hibernating and we won't be able to bring one), and a live chuckwalla lizard. Students will also learn about desert big horn sheep, jackrabbits, and roadrunners.

To do BEFORE the rangers visit your class:

Complete the "Desert Animal" project with the class before the ranger visits. See attached activity sheet.

To do AFTER the rangers visit your class:

Complete the "About My Animal" activity. See the attached activity sheet. PLEASE SEND THE COMPLETED ACTIVITY to the Red Rock Canyon Environmental Education Staff. We use the sheets as an evaluation tool for the program. We also scan in selected projects and post them on our web-site.

Conclusion Animals have adapted in a number of ways to survive the harsh conditions of the Mojave Desert.

DESERT ANIMALS

Grade: Kindergarten and 1st

Subject: Science, Language Arts, Art

Skills: Drawing, generalization, invention, media construction, observation, reading, writing

Duration: 45 minutes **Group size:** any **Setting:** Indoors

Materials:

Pictures of desert animals such as the desert tortoise, coyote, big horn sheep, cactus wren, roadrunners, chuckwalla lizard, desert iguana, etc.; crayons, paint; chalk; construction paper; scissors; glue

Optional: artificial feathers, tissue paper, acorn shells, uncooked noodles

Procedure:

1. Lead a discussion by asking students to name and describe real desert animals. Show students pictures of desert animals. Discuss how each of the animals has special features to help it survive in the desert.
2. This is a “Make a Desert Animal” project! Get out crayons, paint, chalk, construction paper, scissors, and glue. With these materials, ask the students to draw, paint, or construct a desert animal- one that could be a real, desert animal. They can make birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, fish, mammals- whatever real, wild animal they would like. Have the students describe how the animal survives in the desert.
3. Make a “Desert Animal Gallery.” Display the animal creations in the classroom. Try to keep the pictures in tack because they will be used for the post site activity.
4. OPTIONAL: Bring in wildlife reference books. Let the students look to see if they can find real animals like those they created.
5. Ask the students what they have learned about wild animals. Encourage the idea that there are many different kinds of animals that live in the desert.

Reference: Activity based on “Color Crazy”.

About My Animal

Grade: Kindergarten and 1st

Subjects: Physical science, life science, art, writing, observation

Clark County Curriculum Objectives: (1)2.1 Observe and compare familiar plants; (1)3.1 Compare properties of objects (e.g., size, shape, color, weight, texture).

Duration: 30 minutes

Group Size: any

Setting: indoors

Materials:

crayons; pencils; clear tape, description chart for each student.

Procedure:

1. Cut out one description chart for each student (see below). With clear tape, attach one to each piece of art work. Review with students size, shape, color, weight, and texture. Have the students describe, by drawing or writing, each aspect of their animal.
2. Send the finished products to:
Environmental Education Staff
Red Rock Canyon NCA
HCR 33 Box 5500
Las Vegas, NV 89124

Description Chart

Size	Shape

Color	Weight

Texture