



Red Rock Canyon NCA Environmental Education Program

Desert Animals

Grades: K-2

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

Standards Met:

- K-2 grade:
 - Science L.2.B Students understand that living things have identifiable characteristics.
 - English Language Arts 3.[K-2].2 Students read literary text to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate authors, cultures, and times.

Materials Needed:

- Animal cards (attached)
- Copy of *Desert Voices* by Byrd Baylor and Peter Parnall or story printout (attached)

Sources:

Desert Voices. Byrd Baylor and Peter Parnall, 1993.

Desert Tortoise, Buzzard, and Lizard photographs by Stacy Dahl.

Remaining photographs by Bureau of Land Management, Red Rock Canyon NCA.

Submitted by Stacy Dahl

Objective:

Learn about animals that live at Red Rock Canyon NCA

Procedure:

Have students find a comfortable place to sit. Tell them they will be learning about eight animals that live at Red Rock Canyon NCA. Show them the animal cards and have a student read the name of each animal.

Read the first poem without the title, omitting any words that might be in the poem that give the answer away. As you read, have the students touch their nose with one finger as soon as they have guessed which animal you are reading about. When you have finished the poem, have a discussion about the animal the students think it is. Have one student act out the movements of the animal described in the poem.

Do the same with each poem until finished.

Note: *If using the book, exclude the Spadefoot Toad and Desert Person poems.*

Suggested Locations:

Open area with room for students to act out animal.

Pine Creek Trail:	Red Spring Boardwalk:
3 or 7	4
Fire Ecology Loop:	Moenkopi Loop:
4	3



Desert tortoise



Lizard



Buzzard



Coyote





Pack Rat (desert woodrat)

I run to
whatever
is shiny,
find out about
anything
new.

I sniff
a gleaming mica chip,
a feather that falls
from the sky,
a pale blue turquoise bead,
a button,
the top of an old tin can,
and the pipe
that a miner
smoked by his campfire
and left on the ground
while he slept.

I take it all.

I am a gatherer of treasure....
of leaves
and berries and roots,
mesquite beans,
sweet red summer cactus fruit,
and a piece of a clear glass bottle
turned purple by the sun.

I stay
close to home,
close to the trails I know,
close to the rocks where I was born,
close to the cholla cactus
I climb so easily.

Everything I want
is here.

In the cool evenings
I search,
darting from rock to rock,
out of sight of coyotes and owls.

I run back and forth
with my mouth full of treasures.

I go home at sunrise,
pushing
and pulling
and rolling
all the good things
back to my nest,
my pile of sticks and dirt
and cholla cactus thorns.

It holds me safe.
It hides my secrets
in the dust.

Jackrabbit

The sudden leap,
the instant start,
the burst of speed,
knowing
when to run
and when to freeze,
how to become
a shadow
underneath
a greasewood bush...

these are things
I learned
almost at birth.

Now
I lie
on the shadow-side
of a clump of grass.
my long ears bring me
every far-off footstep,
every twig that snaps,
every rustle in the weeds.

I watch
Coyote move
from bush to bush.

I wait.
He's almost here.

Now...

Now I go
like a zig-zag
lightning flash.
with my ears laid back,
I sail.

Jumping gullies
and bushes and rocks,
doubling back,
circling,
jumping high
to see where my enemy is,

warning rabbits
along the way,

I go.

I hardly touch
the ground.

And suddenly
I disappear.

Let Coyote stand there
sniffing
old *[jackrabbit]* trails.

Where I am now
is a
[jackrabbit] secret.

Rattlesnake

I move so flat against
the earth
that I know all
its mysteries.

I understand
the way the sun
clings to rocks
after the sun is gone.

I understand
the long cold shadows
that wrap themselves
around me
and slow my blood
and call me back
into the earth.

On the south side of
a rocky slope
were the sun can warm
my hiding place,
I wait for the cold
that draws me into
sleep.

I understand
waking
in spring,
still cold,
hardly moving,
seeking warmth,
seeking food,
going from darkness
to light.

I understand
the shedding
of old skin
and the tenderness
of my new soft shining
self
flowing
smooth as water
over sand

I understand
the sudden strike,
the death I hold
behind my fangs.

Wherever I go
I cast
a shadow of fear.

Cactus Wren

On the hottest
summer afternoons
when desert creatures
look for shade
and stay close to the earth
and keep their voices
low

But now
it holds
six small brown birds

and me.

I sit high on a cactus
and fling
my loud ringing trill
out to the sun...

over and over
again.

My home is in a cholla cactus.
I won't live
where cactus doesn't grow
because I know
the only safe place
for a nest
is a sticker branch
in a cactus thicket.

I like thorns
in all directions.

At the entrance
of my nest
I pile more cactus.
I peck off the spines
where I go
in and out.

It is so good a nest
that when we leave it
other creatures
will move in –
a family of crickets
or a cactus-climbing mouse.

Desert Tortoise

I am the *old* one here.

Mice
and snakes
and deer
and butterflies
and badgers
come and go.
Centipedes
and eagles
come and go.

But [*tortoises*]
grow old
and *stay*.

Our lives stretch out.

I cross
the same arroyo
that I crossed
when I was young,
returning to
the same safe den
to sleep through
winter's cold.
Each spring,
I warm myself
in the same sun,
search for the same
long tender blades
of green,
and taste the same
ripe juicy cactus fruit.

I know
the slow
sure way
my world
repeats itself.
I know
how I fit in.

My shell still shows
the toothmarks
where a wildcat
thought he had me
long ago.

He didn't know
that I was safe
beneath
that hard brown rock
he tried to bite.

I trust that shell.
I move
at my own speed.

This
is a good place
for an old [*tortoise*]
to walk.

Buzzard

(turkey vulture)

I am a bird of silence.
I do not sing at dawn
or call out to my mate
across the sky.

Up on the cliff where we roost,
wind is the only sound.
I let it speak
for me.

All day
I ride on waves
of hot dry desert air,
on lifting currents
of heat,
circling without effort,
wheeling
soaring
gliding
drifting
upward

I move with my large wings
set to the wind.

Beautiful in the sky,
I follow death.

High over the world,
I watch.

Across valleys and canyons
and wide flat desert land,
others of my kind
are watching, too.

If one of us drops down,
another follows,
and another...
and from far away,
still others come.

We kill nothing,
harm nothing alive.

I only take what is waste.

When I go
I leave nothing
but bones.

Lizard

When my mother laid her eggs
she looked for sand
that was just right.
It had to be damp
and it had to be warmed
all day by sun.

Down in that sand
she buried her eggs.

When she left,
she didn't come back.
There wasn't any need to.
Sand and sun
are mother enough
[for lizards].

I dug my way
to sunlight.
It didn't take me long
to flick my tongue
and catch a gnat
and learn
that when the sun goes down
you can be warm
beneath a little mound
of sand.

It didn't take me long
to learn

the way
a [lizard] runs-
just a flash of speed
across the sand,
almost too fast
to be a shape.

Now
the hotter the sun,
the better I like it.
The rougher the country,
the faster I run.

When I rest,
looking out over
the world
from a rock,
I show
the bright blue shining
color of my underside.
I seem to be made
of earth
and sky.

But then
I run again
and I'm nothing
but a blur
in the hot white sun.

Coyote

I may live
hungry.
I may live
on the run.
I may be
a wanderer
and a trickster
and one
who'll try
anything

and a lot too nosy
for my own good

and a lot
too restless, too.

But I'm going to
make it –
no matter what.

I'll eat anything,
sleep anywhere,
run any distance,
dig for water
if I have to
because
I'm going to
survive
In this dry
rocky land...

and while I'm
doing it,
I'm going to
sing
about it.

I sing about cold,
and traps,
and traveling on,
and new soft pups
in a sandy den,
and rabbit hunts,
and the smell of rain.

I sing
for a wandering
[coyote] band
over there
across the hills,
telling them
[coyote] things,

saying
We're here
We're here
Alive
In the moonlight