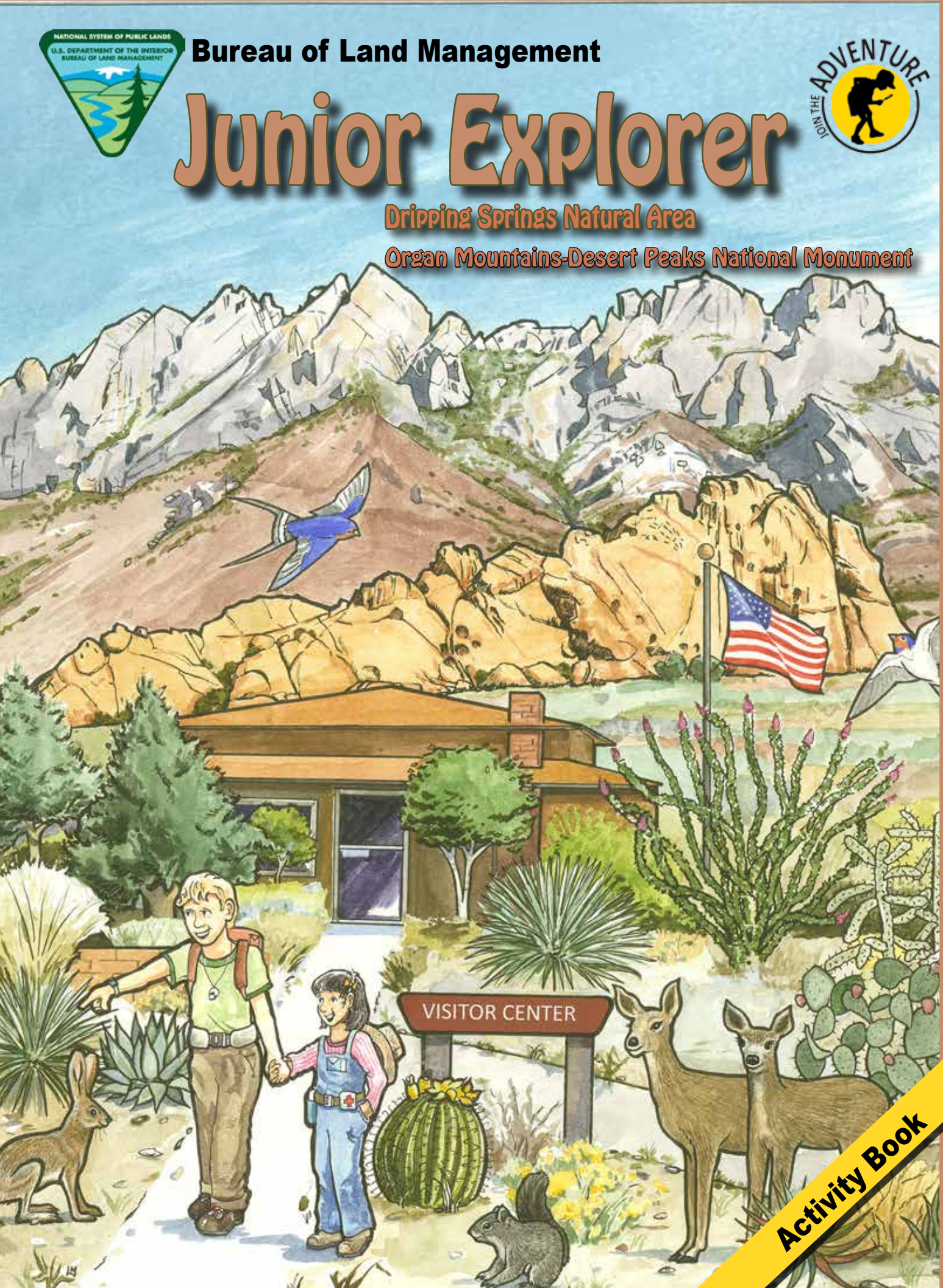
Bureau of Land Management

Junior Explorer

JOIN THE ADVENTURE

Dripping Springs Natural Area

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument



Activity Book

Junior Explorers and the BLM

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Junior Explorer Program helps introduce young explorers like you to the lands and resources that the BLM manages. This is the Junior Explorer activity book for Dripping Springs Natural Area - a special area within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, located outside Las Cruces, New Mexico. You can work through the activities on your own or invite a sibling, parent, or an adult you know to join you. Complete five or more of the activities in this book, and show them to a BLM staff member at the Visitor Center or mail it to the BLM office in Las Cruces. Then, take the Junior Explorer pledge on the back cover and sign the certificate. You're on your way to exploring and protecting America's public lands.

If you are mailing it, be sure to include your return address.

Mail to: Bureau of Land Management
ATTN: Junior Explorer Program
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005

Public Lands Belong To You!

The BLM is a Federal government agency that takes care of more than 245 million acres of land. Most of these lands are in the western United States. These lands are America's public lands, and they belong to all Americans. These public lands are almost equal in area to all the land in Texas and California combined.

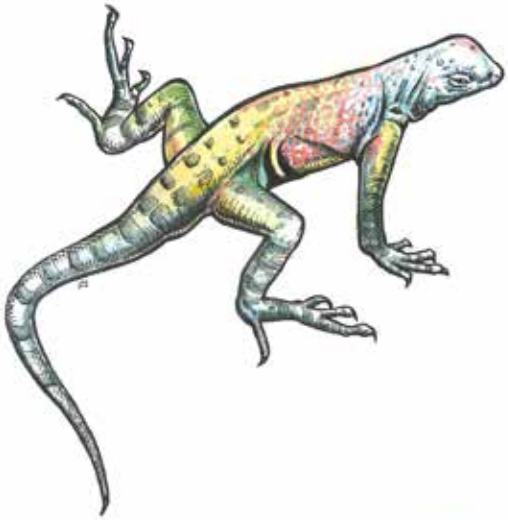
The BLM manages public lands for many uses. The lands supply natural resources, such as coal, oil, natural gas, and other minerals. The lands provide habitats for plants and animals. People enjoy the big open spaces on the lands. The lands also contain evidence of our country's past, ranging from fossils and Indian artifacts to ghost towns.

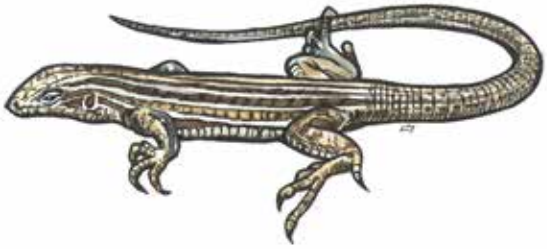
Illustrations for this book by Lorenzo Moreno.

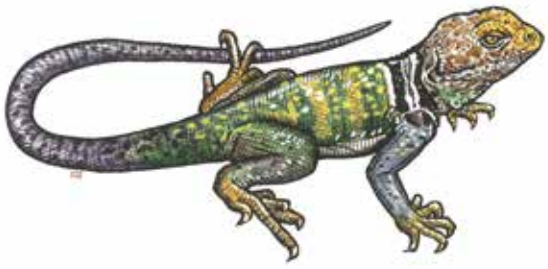
Leaping Lizards

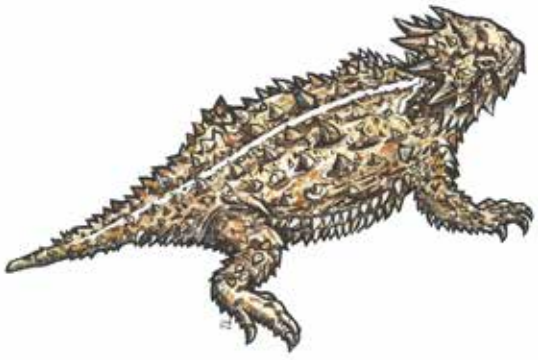
Here are pictures of lizards you might see at Dripping Springs. Can you identify what kind of lizards these are? Check in the Visitor Center Kids' Corner for a poster to help you identify them.

*Did you see any of them on your hike? If you did, make notes next to the picture about what it was doing when you saw it. *Challenge - mimic the movements of the lizards you saw.*









Match the Tracks

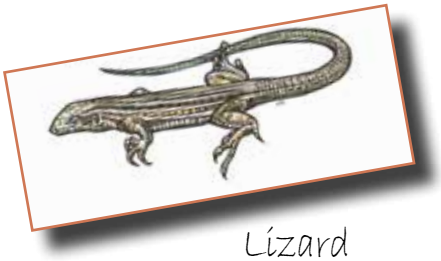
Draw a line from the track-maker to the kind of track it makes.

Ringtail

Roadrunner

Hiker

Mountain Lion



Lizard

Coyote

Take a Hike

Hike up the La Cueva Trail and look for the plants shown below. Place a check mark in the box next to the plant if you find it along the Trail. Also, complete the nature notes on how you felt and what you saw, smelled, and heard on your hike.

☐ Sotol

☐ Yucca

☐ Fish Hook Cactus

Nature Notes

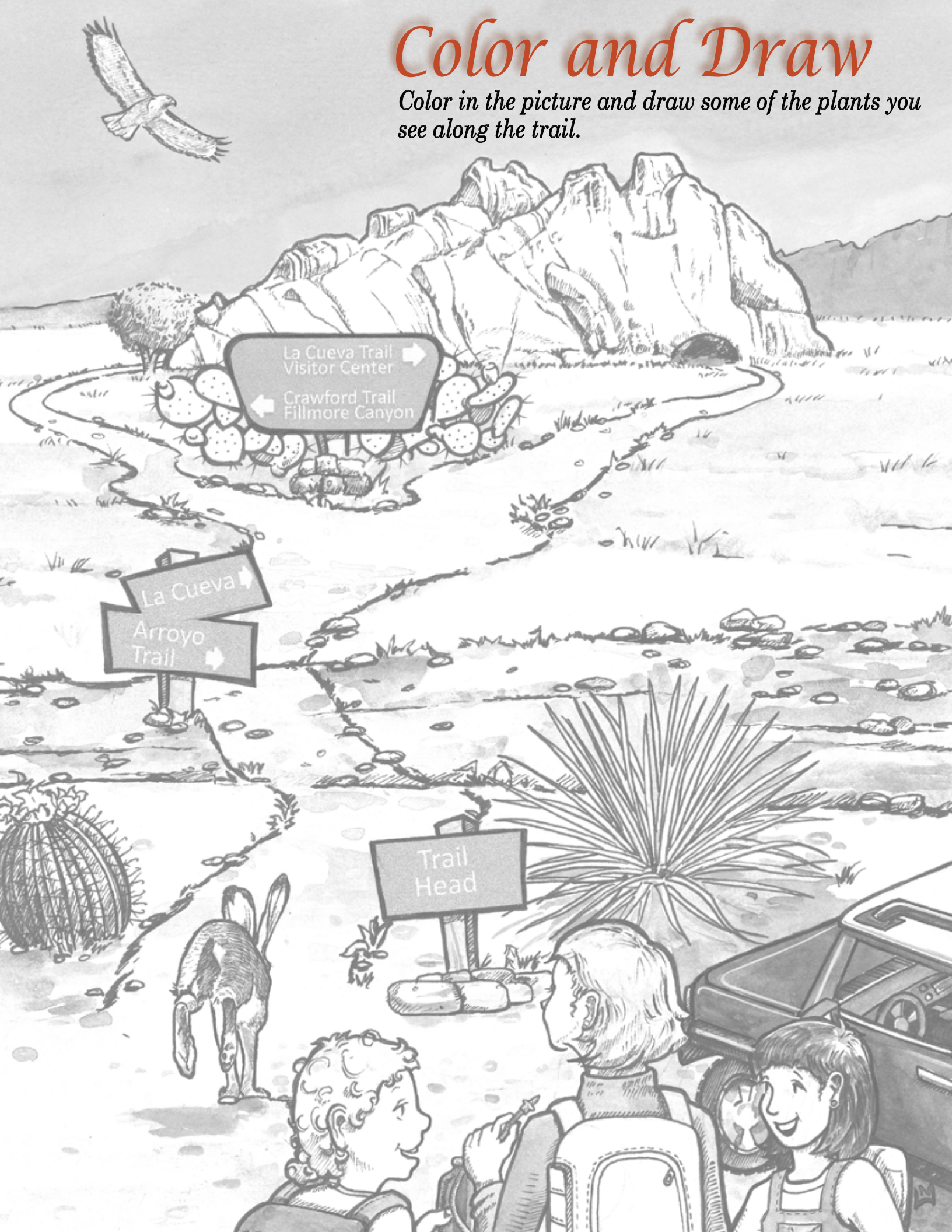
☐ Prickly Pear Cactus

In the box below, draw a plant that you see on the trail and is not pictured above.

Do you know its name?

Color and Draw

Color in the picture and draw some of the plants you see along the trail.



The Hermit

A man who people called the Hermit lived and died in La Cueva.

There is a panel with information about him there. Use that panel to answer the following questions:

1. Where was the Hermit born?

2. What was his real name?

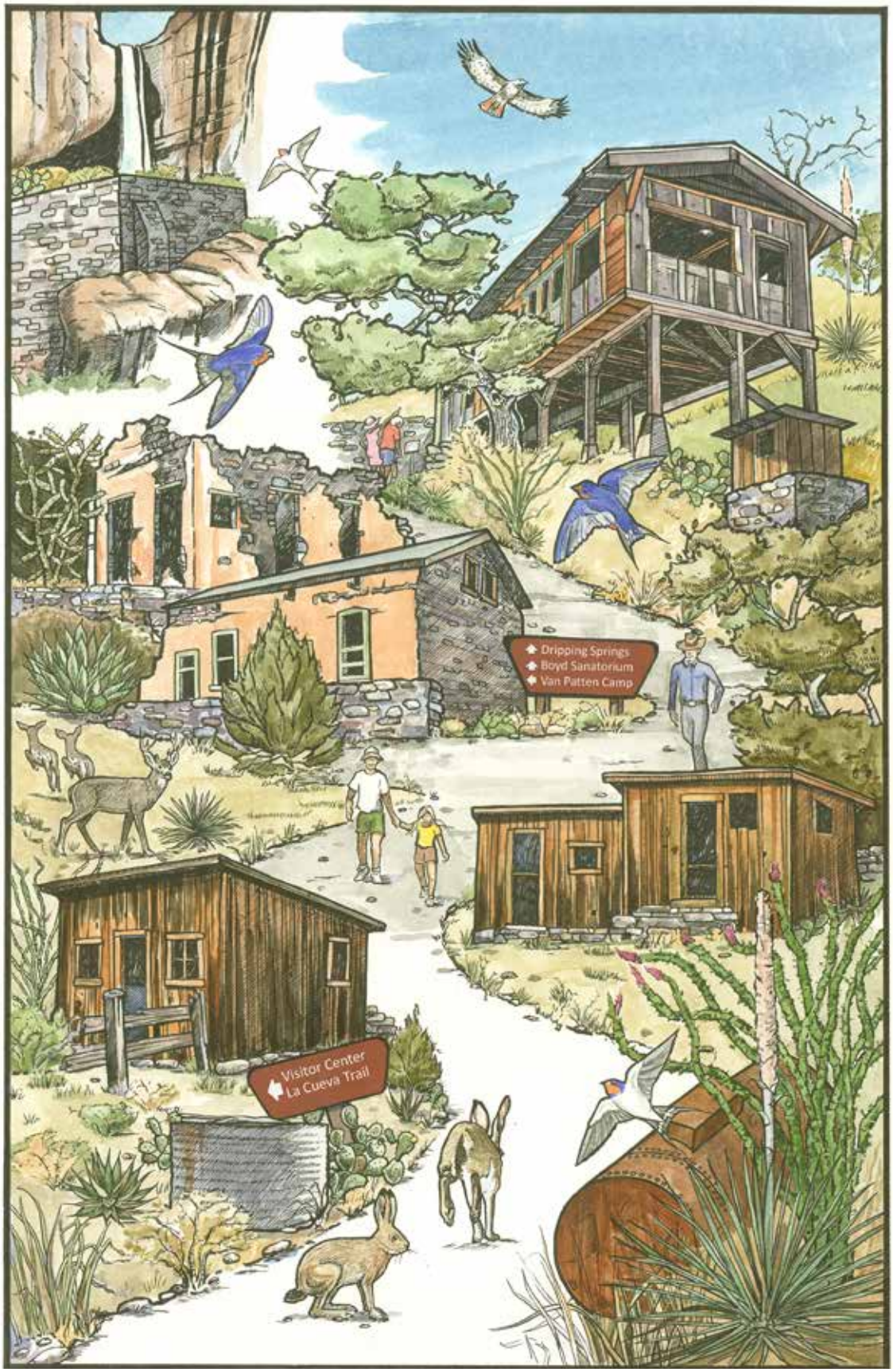
3. When did he die?

4. How did his friends in Mesilla know that something was wrong?

Sounds of Nature

Sit in one place, close your eyes, and listen.
What do you hear? Draw the different things you hear in the space below.

Dripping Springs Trail



Hike Dripping Springs Trail. As you hike, circle the things you see in this picture. Take notes in the box below of what the wildlife was doing and what the historical buildings used to be.

What kind of wildlife did you see on the Trail?

Nature Inspires

Nature has been inspired many artists, writers, and photographers. Become inspired by this coyote scene and either write or tell a story about what is going on here.

Adaptations

Animals and plants have had to adapt in order to survive. Match the adaptation listed below with the plant or animal that it best fits. Write the numbers in the circles.

○ Prickly Pear Cactus

○ Ringtail

○ Ocotillo

○ Western Diamondback Rattlesnake

○ Jackrabbit

○ Mule Deer

○ Roadrunner

1. This animal has adapted to run at high speed through the desert to remain camouflaged, avoid recognition from predators, and to hunt successfully.

2. This animal has excellent eyesight and hearing, which are both helpful adaptations for a nocturnal animal.

3. This plant is a large shrub with long cane-like unbranched spiny stems. It is adapted to its environment by sheding small leaves during dry spells. It has a shallow but wide root system, which it uses to gather rain-water

4. This animal's large ears help it to lose heat, thereby cooling its body temperature.

5. This plant has an advantage in the desert because it has fixed spines instead of leaves. The green pads produce the plant's food, and loses less water than leaves.

6. This larger animal has adapted to living in the desert by being active during night and early morning hours in warmer seasons.

7. This animal is a pit viper. This means that it has a heat sensing pit (loreal pit) behind each nostril that can detect differences in temperature, allowing it to detect prey.

Leave No Trace

The Leave No Trace Principles are seven simple guidelines to follow when visiting Dripping Springs Natural Area and other public lands in order to leave the area the same or better than when you arrived.

***Know before you go:** Be prepared with the right clothing, maps, and knowledge about the area.

***Choose the right path:** Stay on the trail in order to not hurt nature.

***Trash your trash:** Pack it in, pack it out.

***Be careful with fire:** Use existing fire rings and camp stoves, and make sure your fire is out cold.

***Respect wildlife:** Watch animals without bothering them or their homes.

***Be kind to other visitors:** Others have also come to enjoy nature, so be courteous and quiet.

***Leave what you find:** Leave nature as you find it. Take pictures and leave only footprints.

Fill in the blank, or tell an adult what you can do before, during, and after your visit to Dripping Springs Natural Area to follow the seven Leave No Trace Principles:

Before my visit, I can....

During my visit, I am going to....

After my visit, I will...

The member-driven Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics teaches people how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. This copyrighted information has been reprinted with permission from the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: www.LNT.org.

Fun Nature Facts

Did you know?

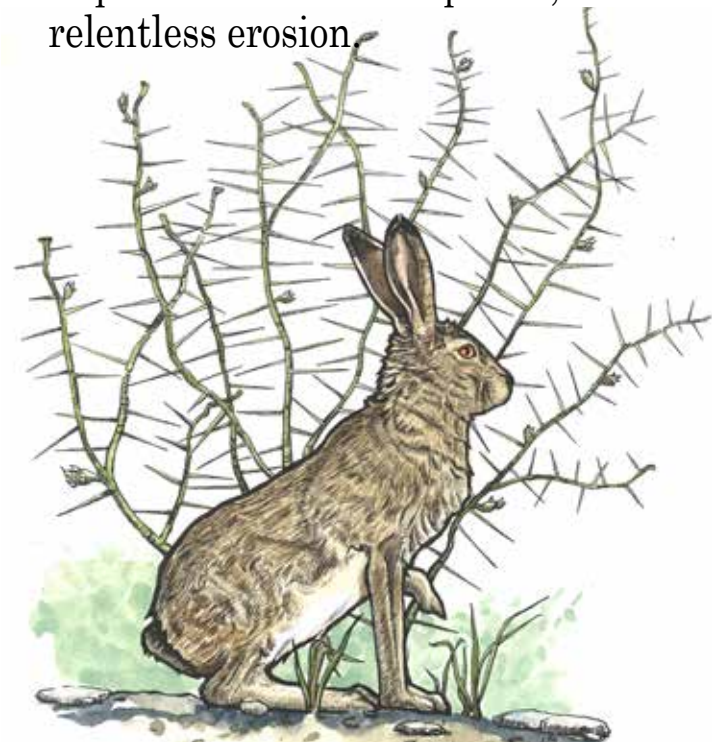
■ Some biologists estimate that a mule deer's sense of smell is up to 1,000 times stronger than a human.

■ The Organ Mountains have over 800 species of plants and host some 80 species of mammals, 185 species of birds, and 60 species of reptiles and amphibians. Some of these plants and animals can only be found in the Organs, like the Organ Colorado Mountain Chipmunk, Organ Mountain Primrose, and Organ Mountain pincushion cactus.

■ Scorpions are covered with several layers of wax so they loose water very slowly - making them ideal desert dwellers.

■ An agave's flowering stalk can grow nearly a foot in just a single day.

■ The Organ Mountains emerged from the molten interior of the Earth in a complex sequence of violent eruptions, lava flows, structural warping and fracturing, and relentless erosion.



■ Although roadrunners cannot fly for more than a few feet at a time, they can run up to speeds of 15 miles per hour.

■ When diving for prey, peregrine falcons can reach speeds up to 200 miles per hour.

■ Getting outdoors and exercising has proven mental and physical health benefits for both adults and children.

Junior Explorer

Certificate of Achievement

Date Stamp Here

_____

is a Bureau of Land Management
Junior Explorer for Dripping Springs Natural Area!

As a Bureau of Land Management Junior Explorer, I promise to:

- do all I can to help preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources on our public lands;
- be aware of how my actions can affect other living things and the evidence of our past;
- keep learning about the importance of nature and our heritage; and
- share what I have learned with others.

_____
Explorer's Signature

_____
BLM Staff Member's Signature