

Meet the Author/Artist, Veronica Murrell

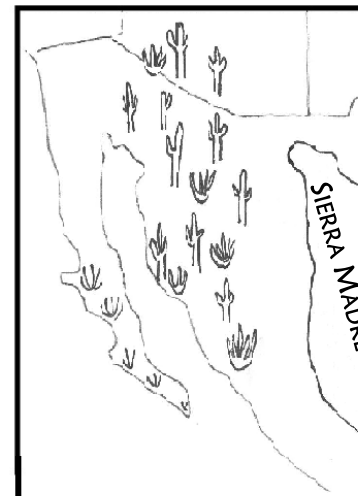
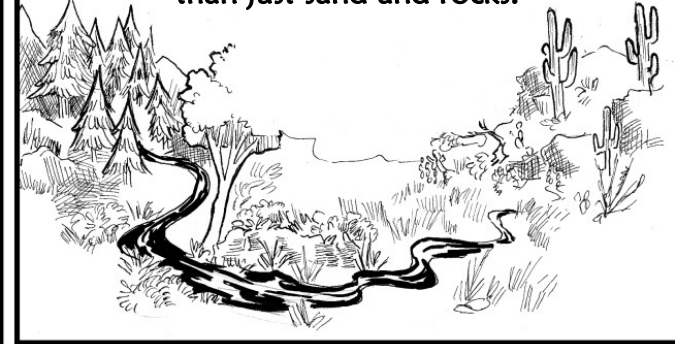
When Veronica Murrell was a senior at BASIS Tucson North High School, she dreamed of the perfect Senior Internship project that combined her two passions: biology and art. She had just taken a class that introduced her to the ecology of the Sonoran Desert, and she was hooked. She contacted the Desert Museum's Conservation Education and Science Department about her vision – creating a non-fiction graphic novel on native plants and wildlife. Her pitch: graphic novels put information in an understandable and entertaining form so that even young children can learn about this region. Her idea became a reality throughout the spring as Veronica participated in school and family programs, attended docent interpretations, and spent many hours observing and drawing desert life around the museum grounds. Her project focus became the biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert Region and plant/animal adaptations to the desert. This book you hold is her finished product! Thank you, Veronica, for your hard work and dedication to creating this wonderful resource for students to learn about the Sonoran Desert!



Mountains and canyons create cooler, wetter climates for living things to call home.



From forests to rivers, grasslands to scrub, there's more to the Sonoran Desert Region than just sand and rocks.



Coati



Jaguar and Ocelot



Thick-billed Parrot



Last, many tropical species reach the southern edge of the Sonoran Desert from Mexico's Sierra Madre Mountains. Here they mix with temperate species from the north.

Even though these animals are more common in warmer, wetter areas, they live in the Sonoran Desert Region.

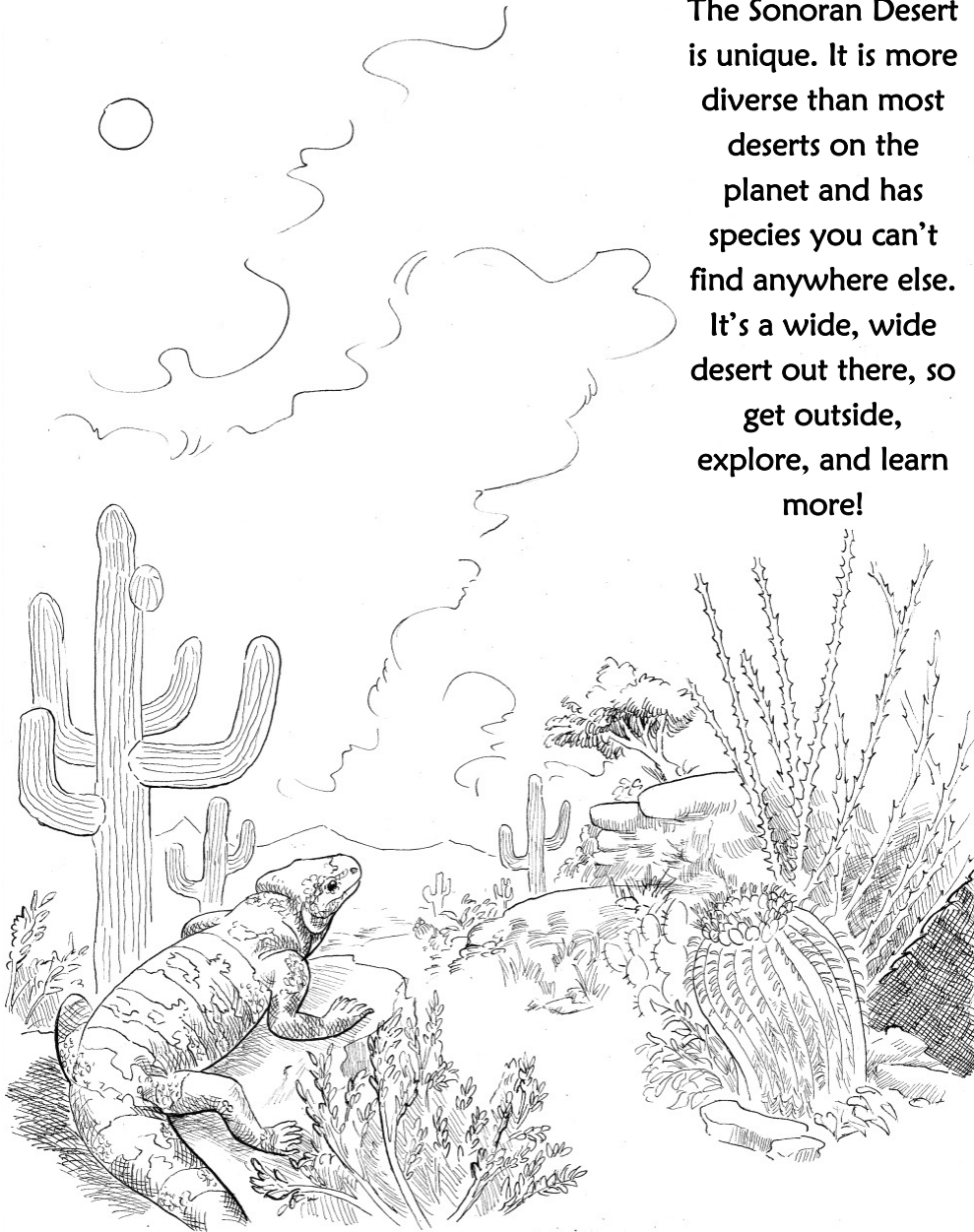
The Amazing Sonoran Desert

The Sonoran Desert is unique. It is more diverse than most deserts on the planet and has species you can't find anywhere else. It's a wide, wide desert out there, so get outside, explore, and learn more!

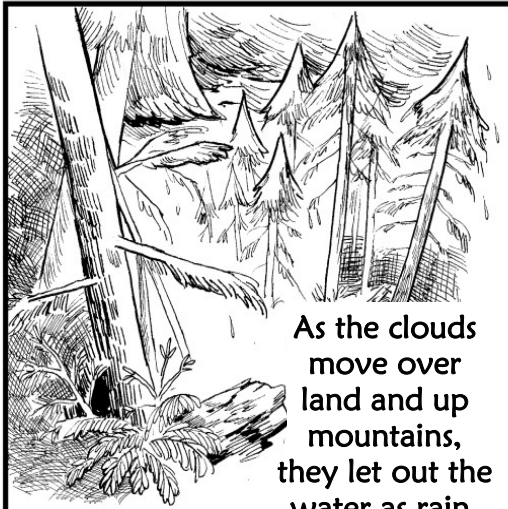
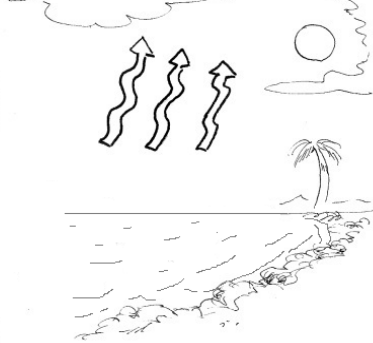


A Mini Graphic Novel

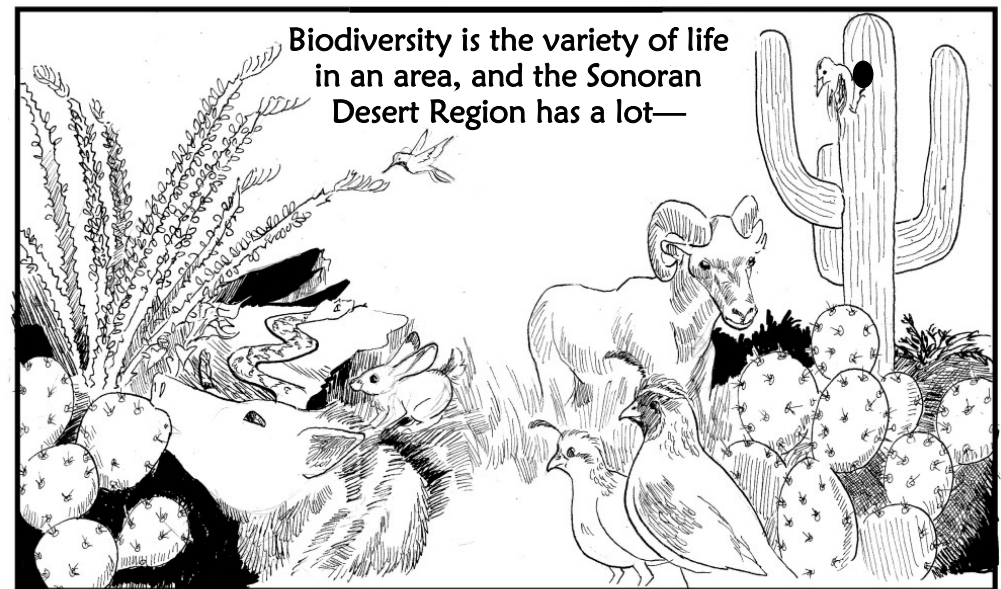
By Veronica Murrell and the Conservation
Education and Science Department of the



Rain clouds form from ocean water in the Pacific Ocean and Gulf of California.



As the clouds move over land and up mountains, they let out the water as rain.

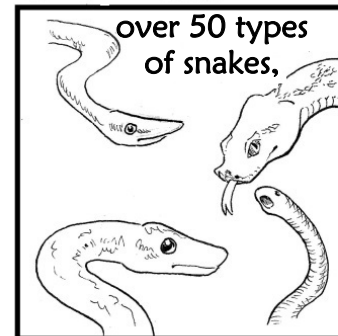


Biodiversity is the variety of life in an area, and the Sonoran Desert Region has a lot—

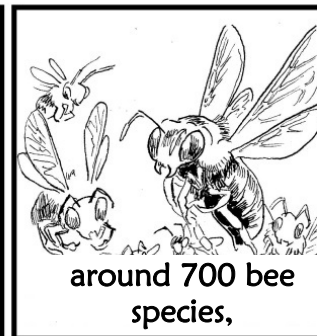
The mountains act like a wall and squeeze out all of the clouds' water before it can reach the desert.

Despite the dry climate, this desert is very biodiverse. But what is biodiversity?

The other part of the answer has to do with how water moves around the globe, but that is another story.



over 50 types of snakes,

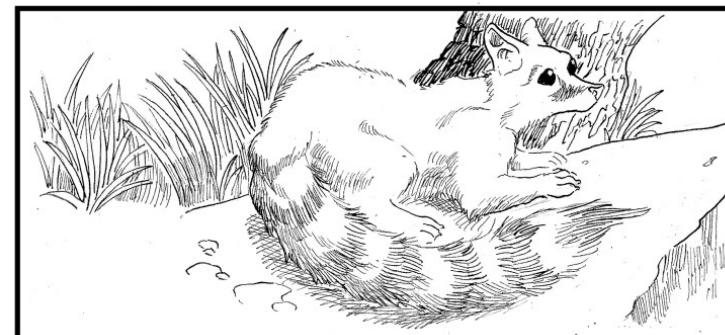


around 700 bee species,



and 4 kinds of skunks,

just to name a few.



It isn't just luck that so many different plants and animals live here, though.

There are three main reasons why this desert is so bio-diverse – rainfall,



habitat variety,

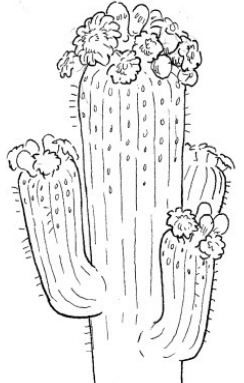


and a mix of species from the north and south.

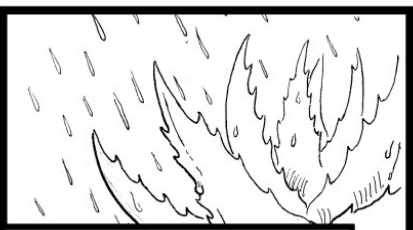
When brittlebush rises from the rocky soil,



cacti stand tall,

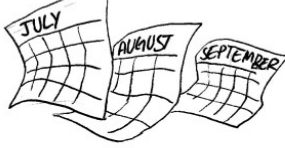


and green palo verde trees offer shade, you know you are in the Sonoran Desert.

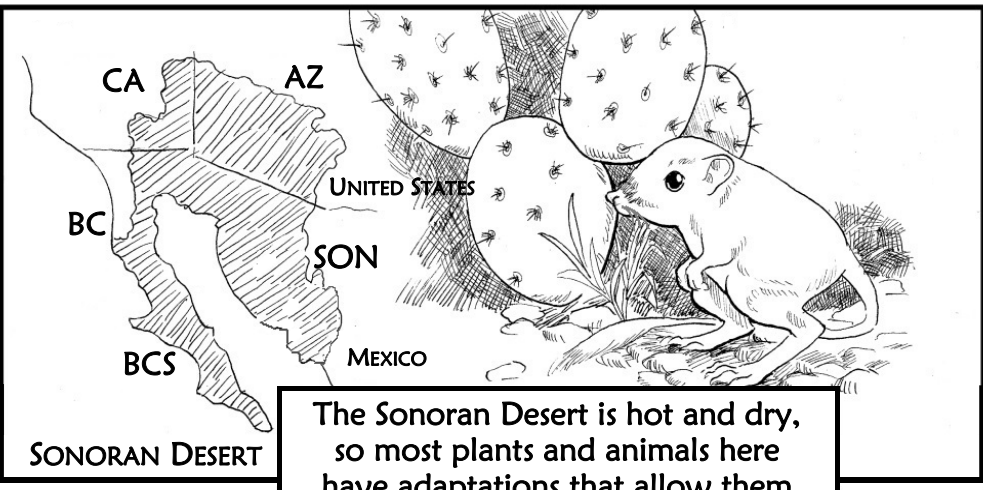
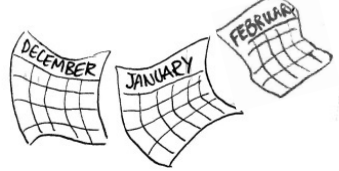


The Sonoran Desert gets more rain than other deserts.

It has two rainy seasons— one in the summer...



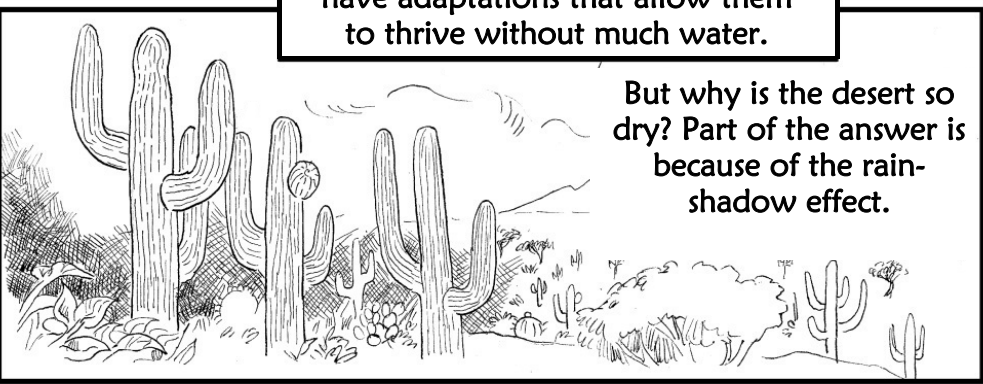
...and one in the winter.



The Sonoran Desert is hot and dry, so most plants and animals here have adaptations that allow them to thrive without much water.



All together the Sonoran Desert gets about 12 inches of rain a year, which makes it much easier for animals and plants to thrive here.



But why is the desert so dry? Part of the answer is because of the rain-shadow effect.