

WHO DEPENDS ON THE SAGUARO?

Students design a saguaro picture that depicts the cactus and some of the animals and plants that interact with it.

ARIZONA SCIENCE

STANDARDS

SC03-S4C3-04&03,
SC03-S4C4-01

OBJECTIVES

Students should:

- Identify the relationships and interactions between the saguaro and other plants and animals of the Sonoran Desert.
- Describe how these interactions help these plants (including the saguaro) and animals live in the desert.
- Identify cause-and-effect relationships in the living system represented by the saguaro.

MATERIALS

- A large piece of light-colored construction or drawing paper for each student
- Pencils
- Markers or crayons

GETTING READY

Prepare the materials as listed in the left margin of this page.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

SETTING THE STAGE

- 1) After their experience in the *Saguaro Tales Discovery Class*, students should have an understanding of the relationships between the saguaro cactus and the many animals that depend on it, as well as the interrelationship between the saguaro and other plants. Have the students brainstorm what they learned in the class.
- 2) Ask, "What were some of the animals we learned about who use the saguaro cactus? How do they depend on it?" (Gila woodpeckers, kestrels, and elf owls use it for a nest site; white winged doves and bats rely on its flowers for food; pack rats, coyotes, bats, desert tortoises and people eat its fruits; and ants and kangaroo rats eat the seeds, etc.)
- 3) Ask, "How does the saguaro depend on other plants in the desert?" (When it is young it requires the shade of a nurse tree like an ironwood or palo verde to protect it from damaging sun and frosts.) Write or sketch their responses on the board.

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Pass out a large piece of light-colored construction or drawing paper to each student. Have them draw a picture of a saguaro and surround it with drawings of the animals and plants that interact with the saguaro.

DISCUSSION

- 1) Have a few of the students present their drawings to the rest of the class. Discuss the animal and plant interactions represented as a group. See if there are any other relationships not mentioned. Ask questions about each one such as,
 - "Where do you think Gila woodpeckers and other birds would make nests if they could not use the saguaro?"
 - "What would happen to the bats, bees, and white-winged doves if the saguaros didn't flower one year?"
 - "What would happen to the javelinas if there were no flowers?" (they would not have fruits to eat.)
 - "How would the saguaros grow if there were no nurse plants?" (they would not survive well.)
- 2) Have the students name the animals and plants that interact with their saguaros. Write their names on the board and have the children label them in their pictures. Have the older students write a story about their picture.

EXTENSION

Put on a class play about the saguaro and its relationships with other plants and animals in the Sonoran Desert.