

LIFE UNDERGROUND

Here you can see desert dwellers who burrow underground or use caves. Many of them are asleep inside, so **move quietly!** Stop outside the entrance.



Ask the children: ***Why do desert animals burrow underground?***

Possible answers:

- to escape the desert heat
- to stay out of the sun in the daytime
- to save water in their bodies
- it is cooler and moister underground

Go underground and let the children's eyes adjust to the dark. Look for the animals in their burrows. Look for the outdoor temperature display posted inside.

Ask: ***What is the temperature outside compared to the temperature underground?***

(Compare the temperatures at the temperature display.)

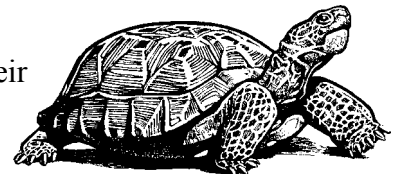
Ask: ***Where would you rather sleep if you were a kangaroo rat - in a burrow underground or on the surface of the ground?***

Possible answers:

- Answers will vary depending on the temperature outside. Kangaroo rats retreat to burrows to escape the heat of the day, only coming out to look for seeds at night. They hibernate in their burrows during the winter.

DESERT TORTOISES

Look for the desert tortoises in their enclosure (they may be hibernating in their burrows in winter or taking cover from the heat of the day in hotter months.)



Ask the children: ***Why should you not pick up a desert tortoise if you see one in the wild?***

Possible answers:

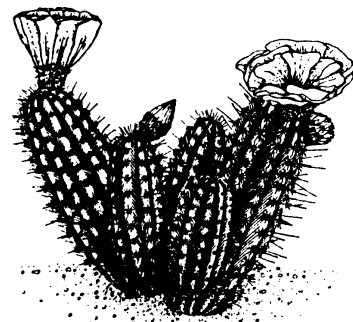
- it might get scared
- we might spread germs that make it sick
- it might get lost if we move it
- Desert tortoises store precious water in their bladders. When they get scared by a predator (or a curious person) they urinate in self-defense. They might lose too much water to survive long dry periods. Also, tortoises have burrows to escape daytime heat. If moved, they might not find their burrows and get too hot.

DESERT DETECTIVES

In the desert throughout the grounds, stop now and then to have the students observe desert plants. A good place to ask plant questions is the Cactus Garden. When you see an answer to one of your clues, tell the students: "I'm looking for a ..." See if they can find yours or another example (remember to stay on the paths.)

I'm looking for a...

- ◆ ***nest in a cactus or a tree***
- ◆ ***cactus with a fruit or flower on it***
- ◆ ***tree with a green trunk***
- ◆ ***plant with red, tube-shaped flowers on it***
- ◆ ***saguaro skeleton***
- ◆ ***plant that stores water in its stem*** (Any cactus or agave.)
- ◆ ***plant with spines on it to protect it from being eaten by animals*** (Any cactus or agave.)



Mesquite and acacia trees also have spines, prickles, and/or thorns.)