



Anza-Borrego Just for Kids

Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association www.abdnha.org

Page 1: Desert Animals



Vic Murayama

✓ If seen **50 Points**

BIGHORN SHEEP

The Peninsular Bighorn Sheep, also called the Desert Bighorn, is at the top of the "want-to-see" list of many Anza-Borrego visitors. This animal is endangered due to disease and loss of habitat, but there is a good population in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Peninsular bighorns prefer dry and rocky low elevation areas, between 300 and 3500 feet in elevation. During the summer months desert bighorns are most likely to be seen near sources of water. Some parts of the desert are closed to people during this time so the Desert Bighorn can have access to water without the fear caused by a human presence.

The bighorn sheep eats many different plants depending upon the season and what is available.

The mountain lion is the main predator of bighorn sheep, but very weak, ill, old, or very young sheep may be killed by coyotes.

An excellent place to look for bighorn sheep is along the [Palm Canyon Trail](#), at the western edge of Borrego Springs. You will be very lucky if you see one!



✓ If seen **25 Points**

MULE DEER

Mule deer are a commonly-seen large mammal in the higher elevations of the park.

Mule deer prefer to browse on woody vegetation and leafed plants when they are available, and generally stay in areas that are not far from sources of water.

Deer do most of their foraging around dawn and dusk and are most likely to be seen in the open at these times. During the main part of the day mule deer will generally bed down in secluded locations not far from their foraging areas.

Mountain lions are the primary natural predator of adult mule deer but bobcats and coyotes may prey upon young or unhealthy animals.



✓ If seen **25 Points**

COYOTE

Coyotes are the ultimate survivors, found in virtually all environments and urban settings across North America, including all of Anza-Borrego.

Native Americans often portrayed the coyote as cunning and intelligent, and they live up to this image by their adaptability, able to survive with whatever food their environment provides for them.

They are opportunistic feeders, and their diet will include small mammals, birds, snakes, lizards, carrion, fruit, vegetation, domestic animals and small pets, and larger animals if they are impaired or unprotected.

Coyotes are very social animals, and the basic structure is the family group, a female with cubs, an adult male, and perhaps some adolescent animals. The range of sounds that they make, high pitched and varied, are to call the group together and to communicate their position.

You may see coyotes anywhere in Anza-Borrego, out in the open desert, crossing a highway at the edge of town, or resting at the edge of a golf course.

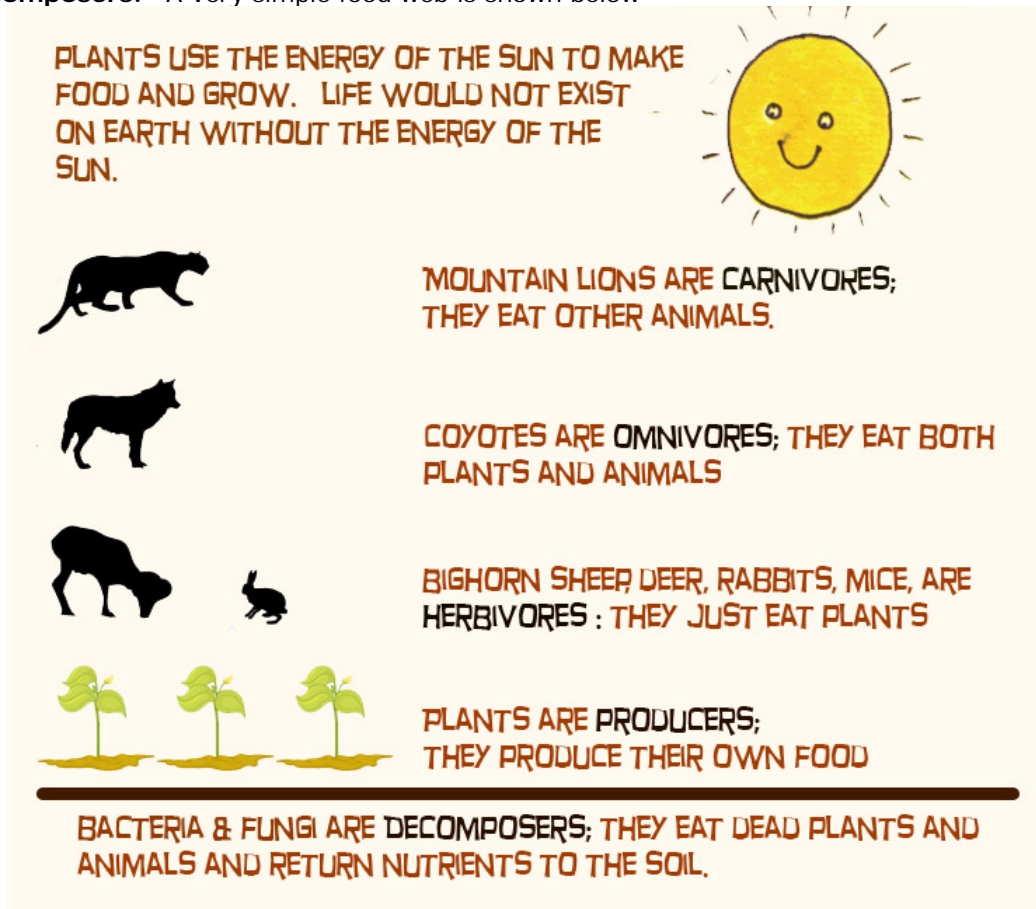


WHAT IS A FOOD WEB - DO YOU KNOW?

A **Food Web** is a way to show how each living thing gets food, and how nutrients and energy are passed from creature to creature. Food chains begin with plant-life. Plants need the energy from the sun to make their food and grow. Plants are called **producers**. They get energy from the sun and make (produce) their own food to grow.

Animals are called **consumers** because they cannot make their own food, they need to consume other forms of life to stay alive.

There are different kinds of consumers. **Herbivores** are animals that just eat plants. **Carnivores** are animals that eat other animals, and **Omnivores** eat both plants and animals. When things die, they decay. They decay because they are eaten by microscopic (so small you cannot see them) forms of life like bacteria and fungi. These forms of life are called **Decomposers**. A very simple food web is shown below



ANSWER THIS QUESTION.....

If Mountain Lions just eat other animals why do they need plants?



✓ If seen ___50 Points

BOBCAT

Although bobcats live throughout Anza-Borrego, they are very secretive, mostly nocturnal animals, and are rarely seen. The average adult bobcat is roughly twice the size of an adult domestic cat.

Bobcats are very adaptable creatures and vary their diet and hunting style to take advantage of whatever the local environment provides.

Bobcats are exceptional hunters, slowly approaching their prey with great patience, and then making the kill with a final powerful leap. Their preferred prey consists of cottontails and jack-rabbits, rodents, birds, and insects but they are capable of taking animals as large as deer, particularly if they are weakened or young.



✓ If seen ___40 Points

KIT FOX

The desert kit fox is the smallest member of the dog family found in North America and common in the open desert, living in the creosote covered alluvial fans and the sandy washes of Anza-Borrego, where vegetation is sparse.

These foxes are mostly nocturnal, spending the hot part of the day in the underground dens.

When you see a kit fox for the first time the thing that may seem most striking is the size of their ears. The oversize ears not only help with hearing but are also an adaptation to assist with cooling. The desert adaptations do not stop there; these foxes have a digestive system that gets most of the water they need from the food that they eat. They rarely need to drink water.

Kit foxes feed primarily on rodents, rabbits, ground birds, insects, snakes, and lizards. If you are lucky you may see a kit fox crossing the road at night, just like the one in this picture!



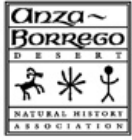
✓ If seen ___15 Points

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT

The black-tailed jackrabbit is common throughout Anza-Borrego, particularly in the flat scrub desert, and is easily distinguished from the desert cottontail by its long ears and long back legs.

Shrubs, trees, grasses, and other vegetation are their preferred foods. Like many desert animals, the black-tailed jackrabbit gets most of the water it needs from the plants that make up its diet.

Jackrabbits spend the hot part of the day resting and keeping cool in shallow-out depressions in the sand. Like cottontails, when trying to escape from a threat, the jackrabbit can run at high speed, up to 30 mph and run in a zig zag pattern. Its natural enemies are the same as many other small mammals; coyotes, foxes, bobcats, hawks, owls, and snakes



✓ If seen ___25 Points

KANGAROO RAT

The tiny kangaroo rat gets its name from its very large and strong back legs and the way it moves around; they hop like a kangaroo and can jump up to six feet in one jump.

This tiny rodent has adapted perfectly to live in a dry desert environment. Kangaroo rats do not need to ever drink water in their entire life. Their body creates water from the dry seeds and other foods that they eat.

The kangaroo rat has a complex system of burrowing; the burrow not only provides a place to hide from predators and the heat of the desert sun, but also has different chambers for caching food, sleeping, and living



✓ If seen ___20 Points

ANTELOPE SQUIRREL

The antelope squirrel is one of the few animals that is active during the hottest part of the day. They are frequently seen scurrying from bush to bush with their tail held high over their back.

Antelope squirrels can tolerate body temperatures up to 108 degrees, the highest of all mammals. When they do need to cool off they will stretch out, belly pushed flat on the ground in some shady spot with legs extended, to cool as much of their surface area as possible.

Antelope squirrels eat seeds, cactus fruits, other vegetation, and insects. Their natural enemies include coyotes, bobcats, snakes, foxes, hawks, and owls.



✓ If seen ___10 Points

STINK BUG

When people think of "animals" they often don't think of anything more than mammals, like sheep and mice, coyotes, and deer. But the term "Animal" is an entire kingdom of creatures and it includes everything from insects to birds, to fish, to reptiles, and those big mammals that usually come to mind.

The very common stink bug sometimes goes by other names, like the "clown beetle", or the "Pinacate Beetle". It is often seen wandering the desert floor, especially on warm nights. When it's very hot or cold, the stinkbug lives in burrows of kangaroo rats or other rodents.

It eats seeds, and plant and animal debris. It is eaten by ants, roadrunners, and other birds.

The Stinkbug has glands that give off a smell to help protect it from ants and other desert predators. When disturbed or something comes too close, the Stinkbug will stand on its head to defend itself, giving a warning that it is about to spray. Don't be scared of me, I am not harmful. But don't pick me up, either, because your hands won't smell very good after that!