

DESERT ANIMALS

Desert Animals Research

Birds

Roadrunners

Roadrunners, or Ground Cuckoos, get their names because they can run as fast as 15 miles per hour and seldom fly. They have a crest on the tops of their heads and a long tail that helps them balance and turn very fast while running.

They do not migrate, but rather, Roadrunners have patches of black skin on its back in order to absorb the early morning heat faster. On winter nights, the birds become chilled, so in the morning it spreads its wings and raises its feathers to get warm so it can go hunting.

Roadrunners eat fruit, insects, small lizards and snakes, and some rodents.

Red-Tailed Hawk

Red-tailed hawks are named for their coloring. They are generally gray or brown with a white chest and a reddish brown tail. Their wingspans can be up to 4 or 4 ½ feet wide. They are the most common hawk in North America and they live in deserts, grasslands, and forests.

This bird of prey often catches its prey while flying with its sharp talons, or claws. They eat rodents, reptiles or other birds. They eat their entire prey and get rid of the parts their bodies don't need like feathers, bones, fur or teeth.

Reptiles

Gila Monsters

Gila Monsters are the largest lizards in the world and have venom that kill their prey. These nocturnal animals are usually eighteen to twenty-four inches long. Gila Monsters eat only meat – small mammals, birds, lizards and frogs. These poisonous lizards have round scales and have black and orange spots. Gila Monsters store fat in their tails, and then hibernate in the winter.

Desert Iguanas

Iguanas, a type of lizard, hibernate beginning early fall and are the last lizard to become active in the spring. They can grow up to sixteen inches long. The mother iguana will lay anywhere from 20 to 70 eggs, bury them in the sand, and leave them. When the eggs hatch, they catch their own food – insects – and live in nearby trees or brush. Some predators are birds of prey, foxes, snakes and people.

Western Diamondback Rattlesnakes

Diamondback rattlesnakes, named for their diamond-shaped pattern on their skin, are the largest snakes in the western US and may grow as large as six or seven feet long. They have a rattle at the end of their tails made up of flaps that make a buzzing noise when shaken. This rattling sound is a warning to enemies to stay away. The rattle is formed each time the snake molts, or sheds its skin.

Western diamondbacks live in southeastern California to central Arkansas and south to northern Mexico. They prefer dry, rocky areas. Although they hibernate in winter, they may occasionally wake up during when it's warmer to warm up in the sun. They will usually return to the same den each year, and they usually hibernate in groups.

The diamondbacks forked tongue collects scents from the air and helps it to find its prey. Since they digest food very slowly, they need to eat only once every two to three weeks. They eat birds, rabbits, and rodents (mice), gophers, lizards, and other small animals.

Diamondbacks, like other snakes, have fangs which they use to inject venom into their prey. When the snake bites, the venom is pushed into the prey's body with their fangs. The snake then lets its prey go, and after the venom has killed the animal, the snake finds it and swallows it headfirst.

Mother diamondbacks do not lay eggs. Rather, the babies grow inside her body for four to five months. She will have anywhere from six to twenty babies at a time. Babies are born without a rattle, but with venom.

Predators of diamondbacks are hawks, bald eagles, roadrunners, wild turkeys, coyotes, deer and foxes. But its worst enemy is the king snake. The king snake is immune to, or not affected by, the snake's venom.

Desert Tortoises

The Desert Tortoise is an herbivore that can live 50 to 80 years. They spend most of their life underground in burrows to protect itself from the desert heat. They can survive as long as a year without water. When in danger of a predator, they can retreat into their hard upper shell. Their front legs have “armored” scales to be used for burrowing.

Females lay a clutch, or group, of 1 to 2 eggs, buries them with sand and leaves them. The temperature will determine whether the hatchlings, or babies, are male or female.

Mammals

Jackrabbits

Jackrabbits are not rabbits, but hares. Hares have longer legs than rabbits and are used to dig burrows. Hares also have longer ears and usually have black tips. They can be white, brown, black or a mixture of the colors.

Jackrabbit babies are born with their eyes open, a full coat of fur and are able to stand by themselves and take steps.

Kangaroo Rat

Kangaroo Rats are not related to the kangaroo, but have large hind legs that make them look similar to the kangaroo. They use their legs for hopping and digging burrows. Their large hind feet keep them from sinking into the desert sand. Kangaroo rats are nocturnal and eat mostly seeds, which they store in a pouch in their cheeks to move to their burrows.

Coyotes

Coyotes live in deserts, prairies, forests, and mountains. These carnivores are related to the wolf. They are brown, gray, cream and black in coloring to camouflage, or hide them, while they are hunting. They have excellent eyesight, hearing and sense of smell to help them hunt for prey and protect them from predators.

Coyotes live in small groups and are protective of their territories. Both the male and female care for and feed their young. They eat rodents, fish, and already dead animals, barely chewing their food, and then regurgitate to feed their pups.

Invertebrates

Scorpions

Scorpions are arachnids and are related to spiders. They are carnivores that sting their prey with their stingers to paralyze them. They eat insects and small rodents. Scorpions are nocturnal and rest during the day under rocks and in crevices. Most scorpions are not dangerous to humans. The Arizona Bark Scorpion can kill humans with their venom along with about 25 other breeds. Scorpions live in all continents of the world, except Antarctica.

Scorpions have 8 legs with claws on the front 2 feet. They do not have an internal skeleton, but an exoskeleton, which means they have a hard outer shell to protect their bodies. Their stingers are located on the ends of their tails. They have tiny hairs on the outside of their bodies that help them sense touch and temperature changes.

Scorpion babies are carried in the mother's body until it is time to give birth. After the mother gives birth to her live young, the babies climb onto their mother's back where they are protected and taught to hunt. When they are able to hunt on their own, they leave their mother.

Tarantulas

Tarantulas are venomous spiders that have between a 3 and 13-inch leg span. Leg spans are measured from the front leg to the back leg on the same side of the body. They have 8 legs with 2 claws at the end of each leg. They have hair covering their bodies that are sensitive to touch. Their exoskeleton helps protect their bodies. Tarantulas live in warm areas, sometimes on the ground, under the ground or in trees.

Tarantulas are carnivores that eat insects, small reptiles, and small birds. They kill their prey with their venom and can crush it with their powerful mouths. They can

inject their prey with something that will dissolve their flesh. While tarantulas can kill small animals, no human has ever been killed by one.

Use the animal cards for various education activities: alphabetical order, research and write facts on the backs of the cards, animal classification, or print two sets and use them for a matching game.

The desert questions mini-books will require additional research.

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Cut out book as one piece. Fold matchbook style. Open. Cut on dotted line to form two flaps

Coyotes: Designed to Hunt

Senses

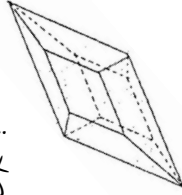
Coloring



Cut out book as one piece. Fold left side in. Fold right side in. Open book. Cut on dotted line to form two flaps. Refold book.

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Why is it called a
"Diamondback"?



Why is it called a
"Rattlesnake"?



Diamondback

Rattlesnake



Diamond Rattlesnake
(Crotalus adamensis)

What's in a name?



**Western Diamondback
Rattlesnake**



Desert Iguana



Red-tailed Hawk



Roadrunner



Coyote



Gila Monster



Kangaroo Rat



Jackrabbit

Directions: Cut cards apart. Use for sorting/classifying animals (mammals, reptiles, birds, etc.).

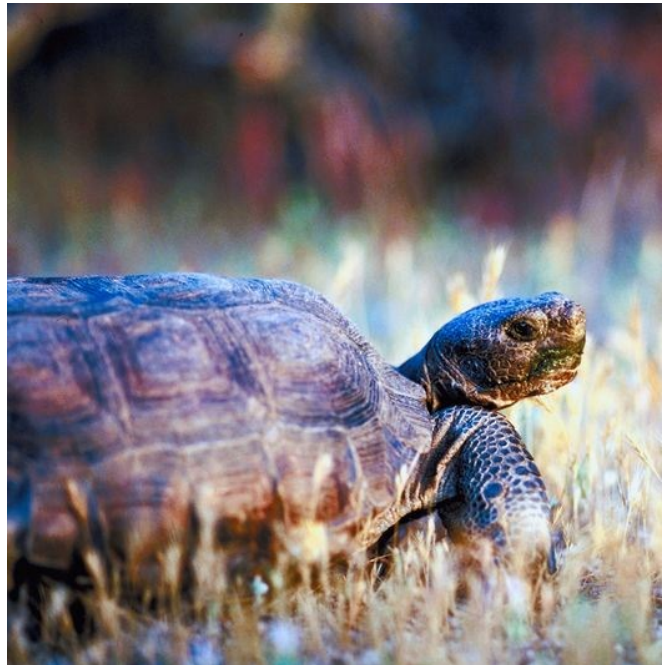
Store in pocket.



Tarantula



Scorpion

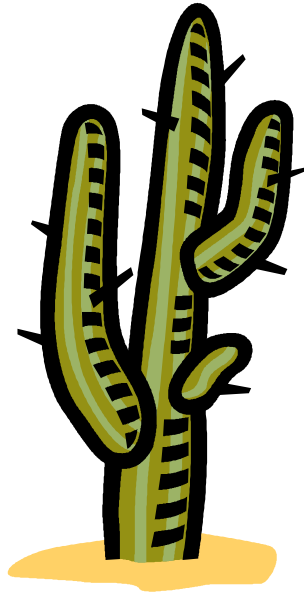


Desert Tortoise

Cut pocket out as one piece. Fold back up. Wrap flaps around the back and glue down.

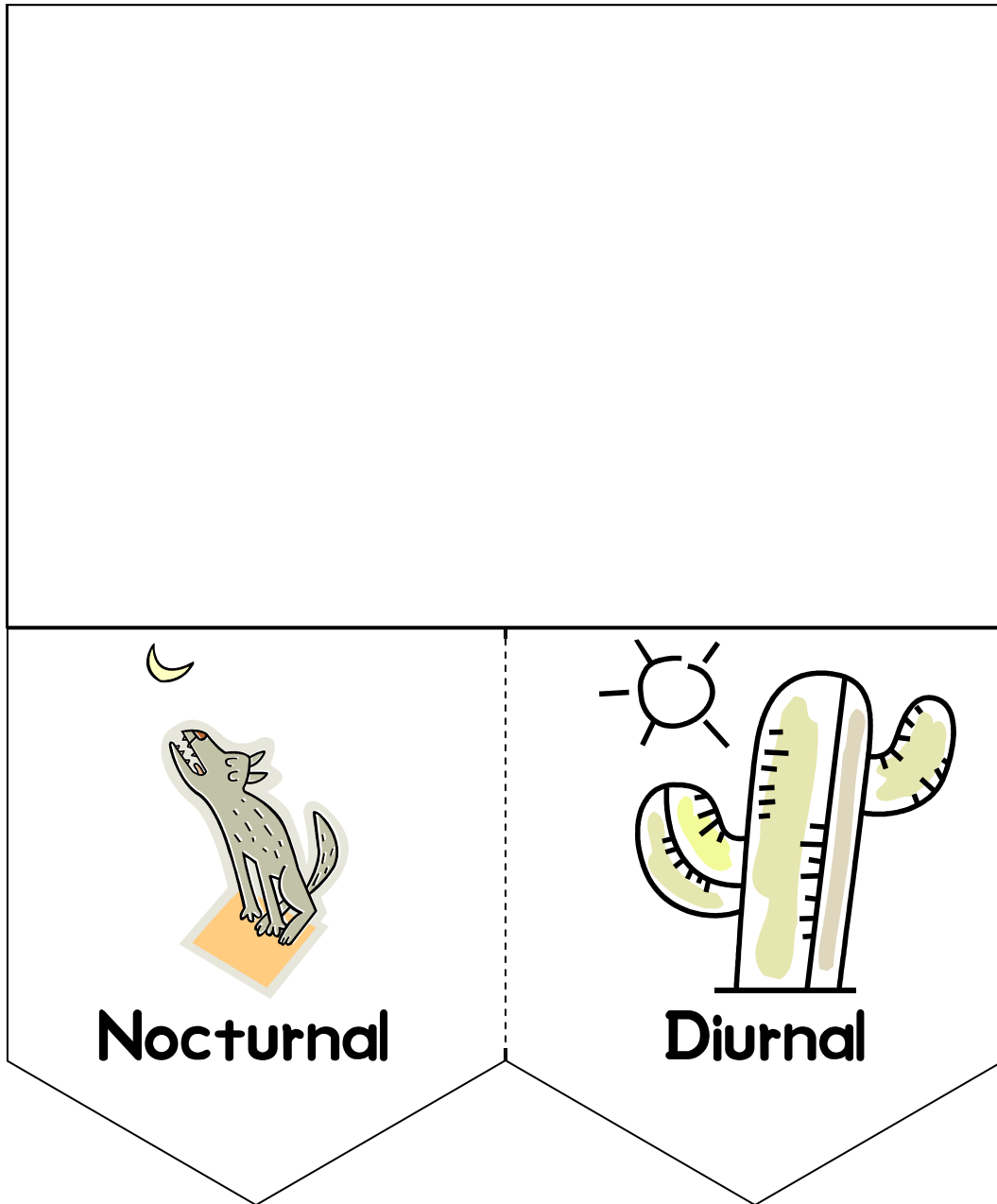
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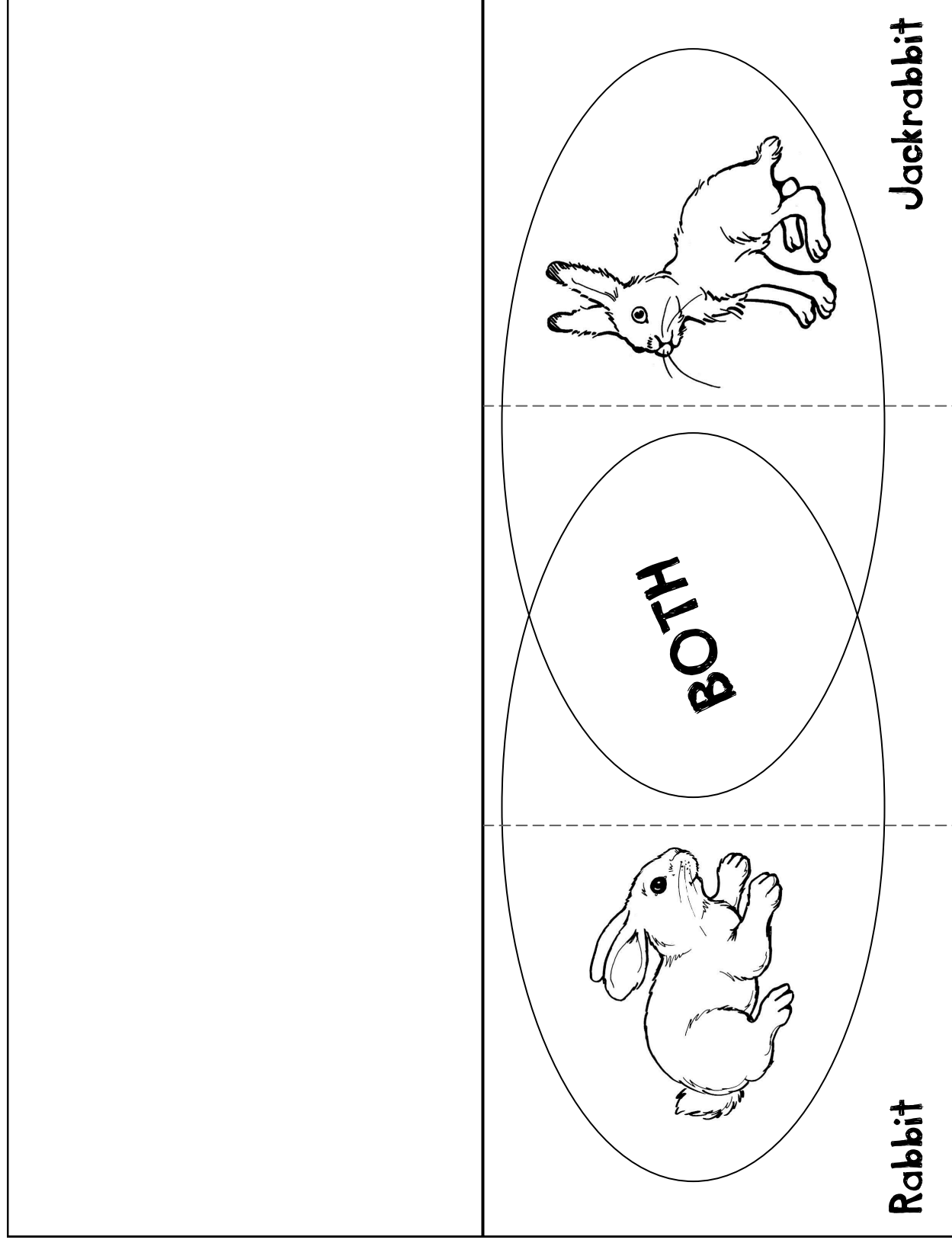
Desert Animals

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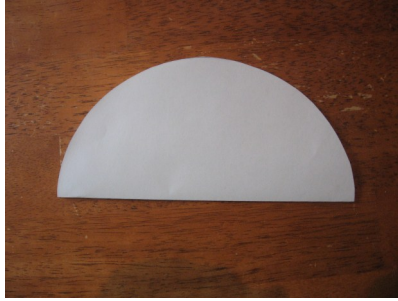


Cut book out as one piece. Fold on solid black line. Unfold and cut on dotted line to form two flaps. Write the names of the desert animals who are awake during the day under the “diurnal” flap. Write the names of the desert animals who are awake at night under the “nocturnal” flap.

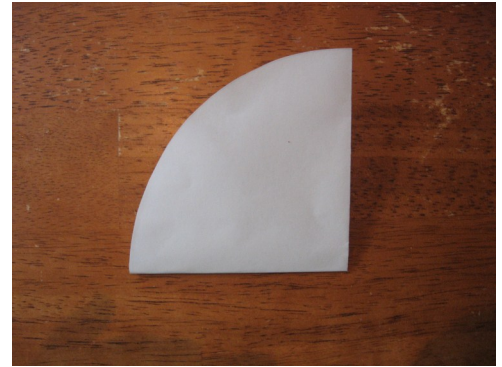
Cut out book as one piece. Fold in half on the black line. Cut on the dotted lines to form three flaps.



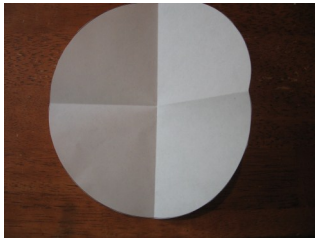
Cone Pocket



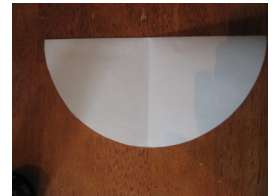
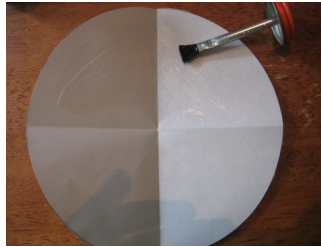
1. Cut two large circles. Set one aside. Take the other and fold it in half vertically. Then fold it in half horizontally.



2. Unfold



3. Put rubber cement (or glue) on half and fold



4. Put glue on one quarter and fold.

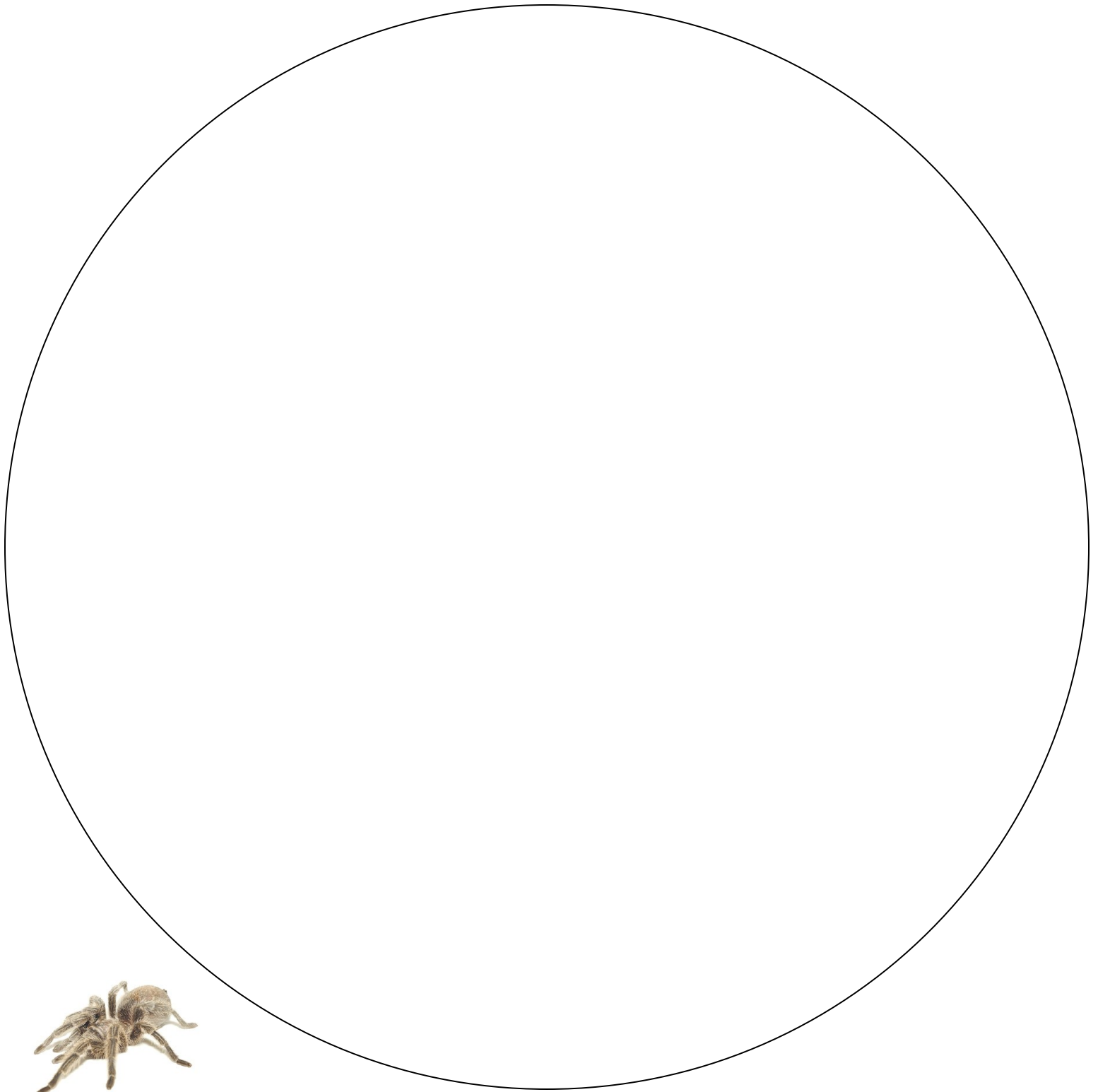


5. One quarter will be open. This is your pocket.



6. Fill the other circle with information, as desired. Decorate cover of the pocket. Fold second circle (half and half again) and slip into pocket.





Tarantula

This circle will be your pocket. Fold according to directions on previous page. Cut/paste title piece on the front.



This is an 6.5
inch tarantula.

Write more information on the back of the circle. Fold up and place inside the pocket.

Kangaroo Rat



Cut book out. Fold on lines (matchbook style).

Directions: Cut out rectangle as one piece. Fold on solid lines. You should have a book that opens like the “shutters” on a window.

<p>ailed wk</p> 		<p>Red-t Ha</p> 
<p>ANATOMY</p>		<p>DIET</p>

**What Is an
Oasis?**



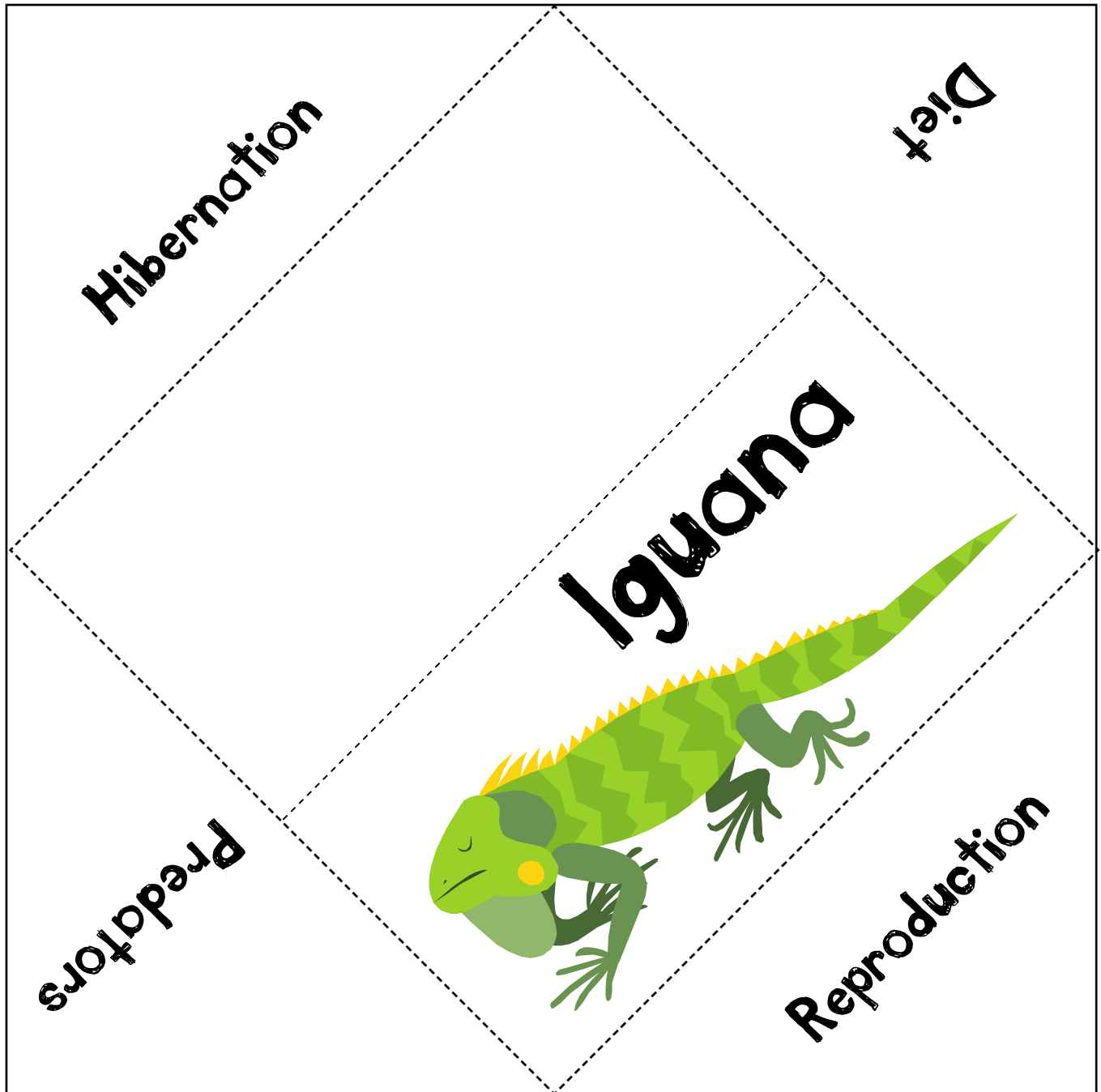
**Are All
Deserts Hot?**



Cut books out on solid lines; fold on dotted lines.

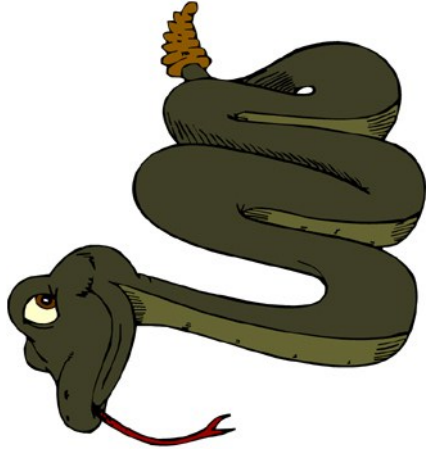


Cut book out on solid lines; fold on dotted line.



Directions: Cut out book on solid lines. Fold all the triangles to the center. Fold book in half. Use as directed in the lessons.

RATTLESNAKES





FORKED TONGUE



Directions: Cut out the rectangle on each page. Stack together with the smallest on top and the largest on the bottom. Staple at the top.

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title
one
two
three

								FOOD
								FANGS

I'm Fast!

Roadrunners



Diet

Staying Warm

Coloring

You are looking at the inside of the book. Cut out as one piece. Fold left side in. Fold right side in. Fold top down.
Paste cover piece on top.

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My Babies



Desert Tortoise

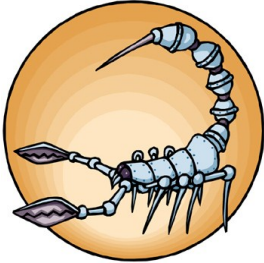


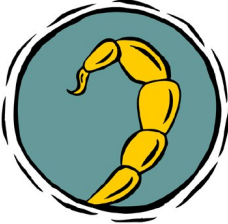
Who Wants to Eat Me?

Staying Safe

My Life Span

What's for dinner?

At My House

<div>Herbivores or Carnivores (circle one)</div> <div>What does a scorpion hunt?</div> <div></div>	<div>Diet</div>	<div>Scorpions</div> <div></div>	
<div>Live Birth or Lays Eggs (circle one)</div> <div>Babies ride on _____</div> <div>When does a baby leave its mother?</div> <div></div>	<div>Reproduction</div>	<div>Endoskeleton or Exoskeleton (circle one)</div> <div>How many legs? _____</div> <div>What about the tail?</div> <div></div>	<div>Anatomy</div>

Is a
Gila
Monster
Poisonous?

Is a
Gila
Monster
Little?

Gila
Monster



Cut book out as one piece. Fold top under. Fold bottom under. Open book. Cut on solid black lines to form two flaps. Refold so that the cover is on the front.