

CREATING A FIELD GUIDE TO SONORAN DESERT ANIMALS

Students will work individually to research an animal and collectively create a classroom field guide.

AZ Science Standards

SC07-S1C1-02

SC08-S1C1-08

SC06-S2C2-03

SC07-S2C2-03

SC07-S4C4-02,03,04

SC08-S4C4-01,03,05,06

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- * Produce a field guide page specific to a single Sonoran Desert animal species
- * Use correct scientific nomenclature, grammar, and spelling.
- * Write knowledgeably about the ecological niche of their selected animal.
- * Demonstrate research skills by gathering information about life history, range, signs, and status of their animal.

Supplies needed

- * Access to a computer (not required, but it is better if project is done on a computer.)
- * 2 field guides per pair of students (borrow from the school library, local library, other teachers etc.)

BACKGROUND

The creation of a Sonoran Desert animal field guide is a project that ties together many of the skills and concepts learned during the Who Dung-it program at the Desert Museum. The following describes the process used to develop a field guide.

ACTIVITY PART 1

Ask the students: "What kind of information would you expect to find in a good field guide?" Record answers.

- * Working singly or in pairs (depending on the number of field guides available) have the students review at least 2 different field guides. Have the students record what they liked and did not like about the different guides. Have the students share their ideas with a partner.
- * For homework the students should pick a species that DOES NOT live in the Sonoran Desert and write a sample field guide page for that species. It does not matter if 2 students select the same species as this assignment is for practice only.
- * In class, students will work in pairs and critique each other's sample pages. They must provide constructive criticism of their partner's work and explain what they liked and did not like about each other's pages.
- * As a group have the class share ideas about what they feel is important to include in a field guide.
Use the following questions to guide the students.
 - What is the most important thing that our field guide entries should have?

- What did you like most about the field guides you read during the last class?
- What is an idea that you had that you really liked?
- What is an idea that someone else had that you really liked?
- If we were limited to only four headings, what would they be?
- How long should entries be?

As a result of the lesson, students should know what kinds of information are important to share about animals in a field guide and how to critique another student's work objectively and fairly and to explain their reasoning.

ACTIVITY PART 2

Have the students select Sonoran Desert animals that they think should be included in the field guide and explain why they chose that particular animal. Write the list on the board. The students should think critically about which animals should be included so reasons like "it's cute," "it's my favorite," or "it's cool" are not sufficient explanations. Better scientific justification for selection of organisms would include reasons like:

- * It is common in our desert
- * It is found no other place
- * It is endangered or threatened
- * It is our State (mammal, bird, etc.)
- * It is important in scientific research

Students are now responsible for selecting an animal from the list and developing a field guide page for it. The information that they must include on their page includes the criteria that the class decided on during the first part of the lesson. Depending on what is available at your school they can complete their field guide page on the computer or paper. Compile the completed pages to create a classroom field guide.