



Kid Stuff

Nurturing Nature

Did you see the desert monsoon storms this month? They were amazing! First the sky gets dark, the wind begins to roar, lightening flashes. Then---**BOOM**---thunder shakes the windows! Rain can pour down so fast, puddles and streams form.

So, what does a desert animal do when there's a storm?

It has a plan!

Where would you go if you were a desert animal?

- 🐢 **Duck into a burrow?**
- 🐸 **Hide beneath a rock or plant?**
- 🐸 **Come OUT because rain means it is time to eat and reproduce?**
- 🐸 **Stay sheltered until the worst of the storm passes?**
- 🌧️ **Wait for cooler, wetter conditions before becoming active?**

Some animals hide. Others come out!

🐢 Desert tortoise: Hide! Shelter first! A desert tortoise's burrow protects it from the heat and from bad weather. The tortoise will stay in its burrow until the storm passes.

🐸 Spadefoot toad: Come out! Wake up! This guy is really amazing! Most of the time he lives buried underground where he can stay for months – waiting for the right conditions (rain!) to dig himself to the surface. He searches for pools of water, finds a mate, get eggs laid and tadpoles hatched. All that has to happen fast before the puddles dry up! WOW!

🐍 Rattlesnake: Drink the rain! Rattlesnakes can drink from puddles but what if the puddle dries up or there isn't a puddle nearby? They can drink the rain that's fallen on their scales. That rain doesn't roll off the snake like water rolls off your skin. Instead, the snake's scales have tiny channels that the water sticks to making it easy for the snake to sip up the water!

Knowing when to hide, when to move and when to take advantage of the rain can make the difference between danger and survival.

Scientists call these kinds of actions behavioral adaptations.



KID CHALLENGE: Build a Monsoon Shelter!

Can you design a shelter that protects a tiny desert animal from a pretend monsoon?

You'll need:

- A shallow tray, baking pan or plastic container
- A little sand or dry soil
- Small rocks
- Craft sticks, leaves or pieces of cardboard
- A small toy animal—or make one from paper
- A spray bottle filled with water
- A fan

MONSOON SHELTER CHALLENGE!

Design a shelter that keeps a desert animal safe from a storm.



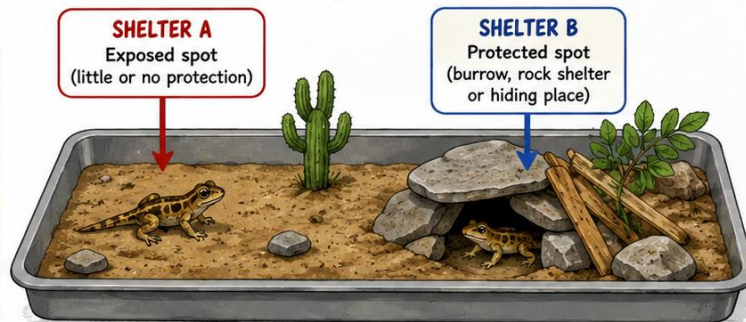
1. BUILD YOUR DESERT HABITAT

Use a tray and these materials to build your habitat.



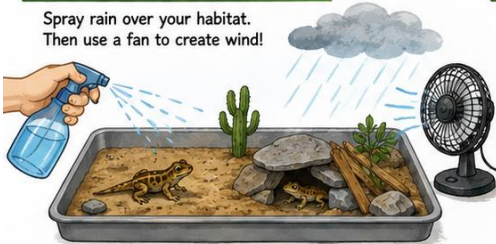
2. CREATE TWO PLACES

Make two different locations for your animal.



3. BRING ON THE MONSOON!

Spray rain over your habitat. Then use a fan to create wind!



4. OBSERVE & LEARN

What happened?

- Which location kept the animal driest?
- Which location protected it from the wind?
- Did water collect anywhere?
- Did the "animal" get washed away?
- What could you change to make the shelter better?

5. IMPROVE & TEST AGAIN!

Make one improvement to your shelter. Test it again. Scientists test, learn and try again!



BONUS CHALLENGE!

Imagine you are a spadefoot toad. Would your best strategy be to hide from the rain—or race toward it? Explain why!

SAFETY FIRST!

Never go outside during lightning or dangerous weather. Always watch storms from a safe place. Be a Monsoon Detective—observe and enjoy!



Become a Monsoon Detective

The next time a storm passes through, wait and watch from a safe space, then look for monsoon clues!

Water: Where did rain collect? Were there puddles or water flowing?

Animals: Did you see birds, insects, lizards, frogs, or other wildlife?

Plants: Did plants look different after getting wet?

Food: Were there more insects around?

Shelter: Did you spot a place an animal might have hidden during the storm?

So now we know that the Sonoran Desert can change a lot when the monsoons pass by and desert animals know exactly what to do!

Puzzles!

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=233bde1b1edc> The amazing toad!

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=359c51faa61b> The amazing monsoon!