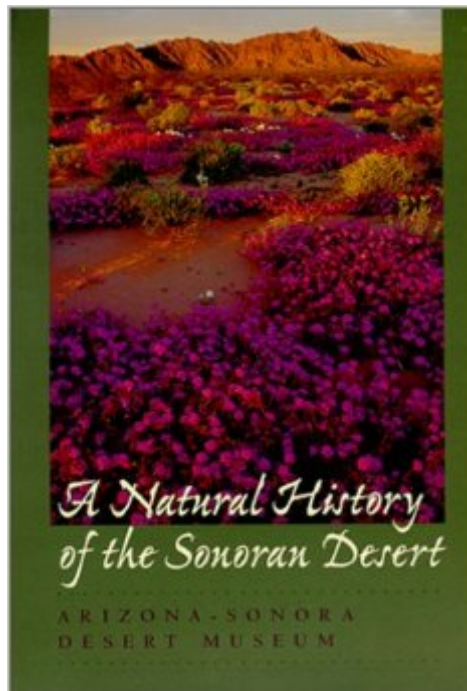


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# A Natural History Of The Sonoran Desert (Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum)



## Synopsis

The Sonoran Desert is one of the most wildly diverse and fascinating regions in the world. Covering southeastern California, the southern half of Arizona, most of Baja California, and much of the state of Sonora, Mexico, this vast area is home to an amazing variety of plants and animals. Its terrain varies dramatically, from parched desert lowlands to semiarid tropical forests and frigid subalpine meadows. *A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert* provides the most complete collection of Sonoran Desert natural history information ever compiled and is a perfect introduction to this biologically rich desert of North America. The authors' experts in many fields begin with a general look at the region's geology, paleoecology, climate, human ecology, and biodiversity. The book then looks in depth at hundreds of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, native fishes, and invertebrates that live in the northern part of the Sonoran Desert. Throughout, the text is supplemented with anecdotes, essays, color and black-and-white photographs, maps, diagrams, and 450 finely-rendered drawings. This comprehensive, accessible natural history is written for nonscientists and will surely become an invaluable companion for nature enthusiasts, birdwatchers, hikers, students, and anyone interested in the desert Southwest. A copublication with the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An extraordinary book on an extraordinary place, *A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert* is well written for both the layperson and expert alike. Each of the diverse chapters is written by the expert(s) on those subjects, who not only know their subjects well, but also write clearly and

enthusiastically. Chapters cover the expected topics -- geology, climate, human cultures, plants, and animals -- and the unexpected -- the uniqueness of the desert's air and light and its "deep" history. The Sonoran Desert is enthralling, and this book will heighten your awareness of the desert's beauty and complexity and will provide you with information on where to visit and what to expect during each of the Sonoran Desert's five seasons.

This is the ideal book to take along on trips to the Sonora Desert. Whether it is the Californian , including Baja, Arizonian(it actually covers five states) or Mexican portions of the vast and diverse Sonora Desert, the details and complexities of this eco system are truly amazing. This book is an indispensable guide to all facets of this immense gift, including the many plants and animals that inhabit this harsh yet bountiful environment. It is a book to read before, as well as after the trips to the desert. Since it is so diverse and vast , covering some 100, 000 sq.mi., the amount of information given is quite a bit but done in such a manner that one can easily navigate the text to the desired area of interest. Inevitably one will stray into an area of new found interest. The little known facts are a lay persons path to knowledge about what the heck they just saw or are about to see. The black and white illustrations for the plants and animals you will or did encounter are excellent and extremely helpful for identification. There is a section with color photographs as well to further illustrate the beauty of the Sonora Desert. With contributions by some thirty five different experts in their respective field this book is the ultimate guide. Do not hesitate to buy this book if you are visiting the Sonora Desert as it will prove to be a valuable reference tool that can be used over and over. Since there is so much to learn about the Sonora Desert and it's inhabitants, this book can be read anytime, anywhere since it is nearly impossible to experience it all.

Recommended for the tourist, naturalist or anyone interested in learning more about the 2000 species of plants, 550 species of vertebrates and thousands of unknown invertebrate species who make the Sonora Desert home. This is truly fascinating material that only nature can provide so don't hesitate to purchase this book.

I grew up in the Sonoran Desert, in the ultra hot (and humid!) city of Yuma, Arizona. During my time there I visited the Californian and northern Baja Californian sections of this huge hyperarid land. I eventually moved to the less humid (if less hyperarid in terms of rainfall) city of Tucson, where I explored a considerable part of the eastern Arizonan part of the desert, as well as taking trips into the desert in southern Baja California and Sonora itself. This is a fascinating land and one with great surprises, such as a fauna of fish and aquatic insects, desert crusts of cyanobacteria, tropical birds,

army and leaf-cutting ants and strange plants. Now Steven J. Phillips and Patricia Comus of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum have edited a neat guide to the area in "A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert". The various sections contain numerous bits of information, many of which were new to me despite about 25 years of wandering in the Sonoran Desert. The discussions of the structure and history of the desert are particularly informative. This book should be in the bookshelf, and indeed in the knapsack (despite its size), of all travelers in this fantastic desert. I have to admit that I know five of the authors- namely Steve Prchal, Renee Lizotte, Gary Paul Nabhan, Carl A. Olson and Thomas Van Devender- excellent writers all- but I can also say that it is a worthwhile book based just on the work of writers whom I've never met and so I can claim some non-bias. To add to this praise I have a few very minor quibbles. I wish that there had been more reference sections- certainly there are several books on the identification of desert plants, birds, mammals and fish! Also, as a jumping spider specialist I was disappointed that the quite readily seen red and black Apache jumping spider (*Phidippus apacheanus*), which appears to mimic velvet ants, was not mentioned (but then I am prejudiced!). Also not mentioned were the bright red velvet mites that emerge after desert rains (I get these brought to me all the time by people wanting to know what they are.) In addition, I could not find any reference in the index to tadpole shrimp- a very abundant inhabitant of desert temporary pools. I suppose that there was little room to add such in this already over 600 page work, but it is a pity, as I think they are of interest to the visitor. One other quibble is that I personally dislike the term "brown spider" as there are lots of "brown spiders"- including wolf spiders, some crab spiders, and many others. I prefer "violin spider" as being more specifically descriptive, although I could never get W. J. Gertsch to agree with me on this (I believe that he is the original source of this common name!) Having said this, I will reiterate that anybody who wants to have some idea of what they are seeing in the Sonoran Desert has to have this book! They can find no better guide on the market!

Subjects are thoroughly covered and the information is written in a friendly and interesting manner. If you have a question about the Sonoran Desert, you will most likely find the answer here. Among other surprises, this book offered my first look at the "creeping devil cactus" - how interesting! I'd never even heard of it before. "A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert" is a book you will turn to for detailed information that can be trusted as well as entertainment. Very nice photographs and illustrations. A great book for a nature lover, even if the Sonoran Desert holds no particular interest to them.

This is one of the best natural history books I've ever read. The incorporation of a variety of expert authors makes it a gem. I can pick it up anytime, open to any page, and enjoy myself. A great companion on any trip to the Sonoran Desert, to pick up where the field guides leave off.

I am new to the desert, about 2 years. I love the outdoors and have been trying to learn a new environment. I have a whole bookshelf of books on the Arizona region, but would have never bought them if I came across this one first. It is comprehensive but not a 800 level college text. Very readable, but full of substance. Well done.

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