



"In the end, we will conserve only what we love.  
We will love only what we understand.  
We will understand only what we are taught."  
Baba Dioum

Conservation Biology has been defined as the study of biodiversity and its preservation. Biodiversity, or the variety of life present on Earth, is extraordinarily high in the Sonoran Desert. This rich palette of desert-adapted plant and animal species and ecosystems is not only thrilling to observe, but they are necessary and vital for the function of the cycling of water, nutrients, waste, air quality and the nourishment of all parts of those ecosystems. We as humans depend on these species and ecosystems for our health (air, water, soil quality), food (one-third of our food plants are pollinated by native species), drugs (many are derived from plants), entertainment and recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife watching), and release from the stress of urban life.

There is little doubt that some, if not many, of our attitudes and values originate in our childhoods. It is during these early years that we begin to better understand and appreciate what we experience. If we are not introduced to the residents and components of the natural world at an early age, it becomes much more difficult to develop ecological literacy and a desire to preserve nature. If we fail to introduce our children to the other living organisms that share the Earth's ecosystems with us, they will neither know nor appreciate these creatures. If children have not met and do not know these species, it is not logical to think that they will magically discover such an appreciation in adulthood. However, children who are introduced to their desert neighbors will find it easy to value and care about biodiversity. We at the Center for Native and Urban Wildlife are eager to introduce children to the varied plants and animals of the Sonoran Desert by offering them a fun and memorable experience.

Observing and enjoying Sonoran Desert biodiversity can be a lifelong passion. We will only save and protect that which we know and value. Each native and migratory species has many ways to survive and thrive in this place we all call home. We invite you to join us in this exciting adventure of discovery.

*Essay by Professor Roy A. Barnes (2007)*