

# Conservancy Kids

We bring the Sonoran Desert to you!



MCDOWELL  
SONORAN  
CONSERVANCY

## Welcome to Conservancy Kids!

Become a junior scientist, exploring the natural world, asking questions, and making discoveries. Join us for an adventure that will take you outdoors, around the house, and into the incredible Sonoran Desert. Welcome to Conservancy Kids! We're excited to see you!

## Crazy Cacti!

When you think about the Sonoran Desert, what comes to your mind? The hot sun, very little water, and, of course, cactus! There are close to 1,800 species of cacti around the world and the Sonoran Desert has about 300 of them--that means we are living in a region that contains 1/6 of all the cactus species on earth. That's pretty cool! Also, all cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti. Hearing the word succulent, you might picture one of the popular plants that have smooth, thick leaves and are often some cool green or blue color. But succulents are actually a term used for a bunch of different plant families. It just means the plant is specially designed to store water, which is why cacti are so successful in the dry desert. Join us to learn more about two of the cacti that call the Sonoran Desert home.



Click to watch!



Click to watch!



## Caring for a Cactus

Obviously, there are no hospitals out in the wild Sonoran Desert. But, did you know there are nurses out there? Well, nurse plants to be specific. These nurse plants have a similar job as the nurses who work in the maternity ward with babies. These are often shrub-like plants (creosote, ocotillo, and even young palo verde and mesquite trees) that provide protection for newly sprouting cactus seeds (and other types of plants, as well). The harsh desert environment can be tough on seedlings, so nurse plants provide some protection from the desert environment while the seedling grows into a more mature plant that can survive.



Click to watch!



## Meet a Cactus

Cacti are everywhere in the Sonoran Desert, including our cities. If you look, you can probably find cacti around your home and neighborhood. If you want to check out some cacti in their natural habitat, here are some natural, open spaces to check out:

- [McDowell Sonoran Preserve](#) (free) (Scottsdale)
- [Phoenix Preserve](#) (free) (Phoenix)
- [South Mountain Park and Preserve](#) (free) (South Phoenix/Ahwatukee)
- [Usery Mountain Regional Park](#) (\$7 entrance fee) (Mesa/Apache Junction)
- [White Tank Mountain Regional Park](#) (\$7 entrance fee) (Waddell)

It's the Arizona summer, so if you do go outdoors, remember to go early in the morning or later in the evening and carry plenty of water. Don't worry if you can't make it outside right now--the cacti will still be there once the weather cools down!

## Connect!

Check out more Conservancy Kids Newsletters at <https://www.mcdowellsonoran.org/education>



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## Connect a kid to nature



Nicole Kallman, Education Manager

Nicole loves science and exploration. In college, she studied physics and biology. Now, she shares her excitement about science with others, encouraging everyone to follow in the footsteps of Miss Frizzle: "take chances, make mistakes, and get messy!"

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Luke Challis

Luke loves science and being out and about in nature! He studies a lot about biology, ways of thinking, and philosophy. Luke also loves to teach and encourage kids and adults to always keep learning.