

Hello and welcome to today's ranger minute. In today's episode we are going to talk about the animals, about where they are or where they are not. A very common question that gets asked in the visitor center here at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is where are the animals? Especially in the middle of summer when it's a 110 degrees, and I always tell people that only animal to be out in 110 degree weather are human beings. So the question is where are they? And what are they doing to beat the heat? Well the answer is simple- they are in holes, that's right, holes in the ground, holes in the cactus. Now some animals make their own holes- some just take them over- and some of them find ingenious ways of beating the heat out here in the desert. Now Gila woodpeckers and Gilded flickers make holes in saguaro cactus. Now these holes inside saguaro cactus can be up to 20 degrees cooler on the inside then they are on the outside. Just think about it for a moment- the inside of the cactus is full of moisture, and that moisture and the shade really makes it so a nice, nice home is inside a cactus. But what if you don't have feathers? You are going to have to make holes in another way. There are lots and lots of animals in the desert that dig holes on the ground. We have got rodents that do it, we have foxes that do it, and one way of beating the heat is going subterranean. Now how much of a difference does that make temperature wise out here in the desert? Well let me show you just how much that does. Now some of you may remember going to the beach as a child. What I want you to do next time you are out here in the desert and standing in a wash like I am, is take your shoes off, take your socks off, and stand right in the middle of a wash. Then what I want you to do is slowly start to wiggle your hips and let your feet sink down in. Now as you get down just below the surface what you'll notice is a tremendous change in temperature and that change in temperature can keep you alive in hot summer days here in the desert. Now how much in a change in temperature, again sometimes an excess of 25 degrees. And if you are an animal like a mountain lion, or a Javelina, or a coyote, sometimes just wiggling yourself down in the sand in a wash on a north facing slope is all you need to do to survive out here when its 110 degrees. So next time you come and visit Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and you want to ask where are the animals, bypass the visitor center and start looking for holes and start looking in washes- and that's today's ranger minute.