

DESERT VOICES

BY BYRD BAYLOR AND PETER PARNALL



PACK RAT

I run to
whatever
is shiny,
find out about
anything
new.

I sniff
a gleaming mica chip,
a feather that falls
from the sky,
a pale blue turquoise bead,
a button,
the top of an old tin can,
and the pipe
that a miner
smoked by his campfire
and left on the ground
while he slept.

I take it all.

I am a gatherer of treasure...
of leaves
and berries and roots,
mesquite beans,
sweet red summer cactus fruit,
and a piece of a clear glass bottle
turned purple by the sun.

I stay
close to home,
close to the trails I know,
close to the rocks where I was born,
close to the cholla cactus
I climb so easily.

Everything I want
is here.

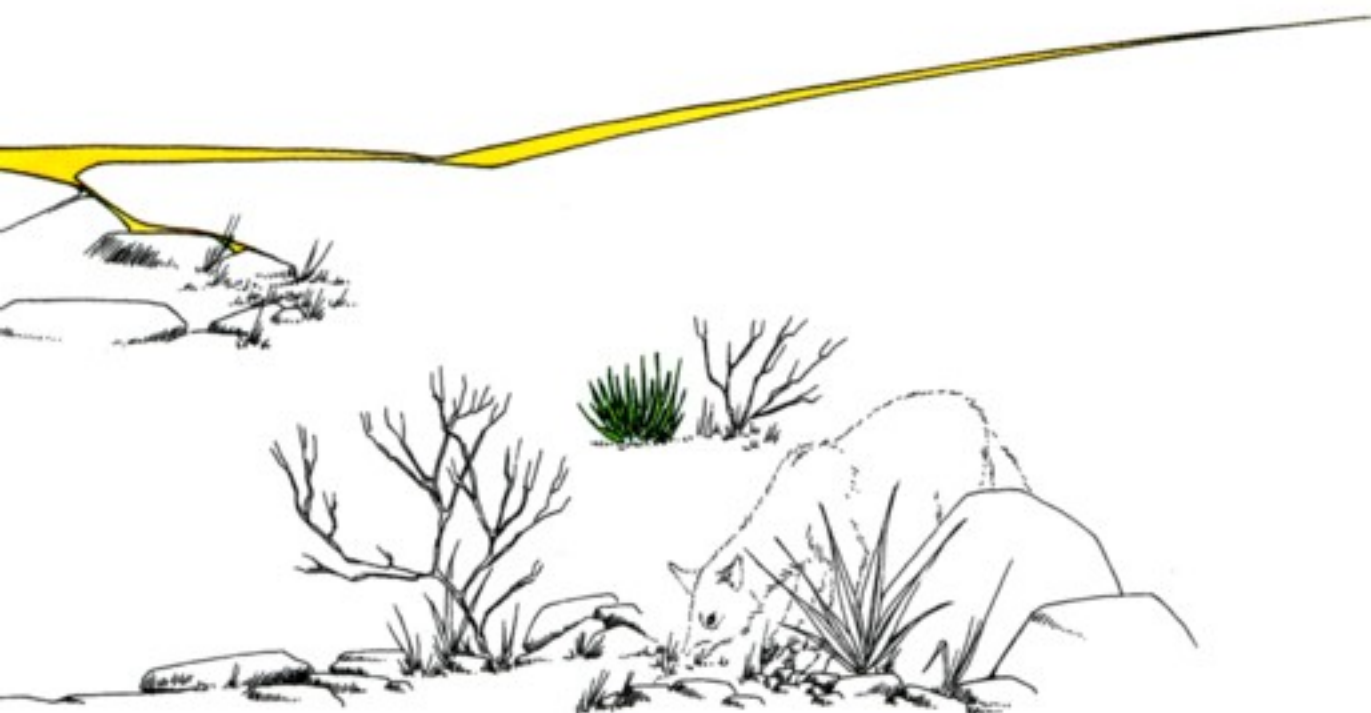
In the cool evenings
I search,
darting from rock to rock,
out of sight of coyotes and owls.

I run back and forth
with my mouth full of treasures.

I go home at sunrise,
pushing
and pulling
and rolling
all the good things
back to my nest,
my pile of sticks and dirt
and cholla cactus thorns.

It holds me safe.
It hides my shining secrets
in the dust.





JACKRABBIT

The sudden leap,
the instant start,
the burst of speed,
knowing
when to run
and when to freeze,
how to become
a shadow
underneath
a greasewood bush...

these are things
I learned
almost at birth.

Now
I lie
on the shadow-side
of a clump of grass.
My long ears bring me
every far-off footstep,
every twig that snaps,
every rustle in the weeds.

I watch
Coyote move
from bush to bush.

I wait.
He's almost here.



Now...

Now I go
like a zig-zag
lightning flash.
With my ears laid back,
I sail.

Jumping gullies
and bushes and rocks,
doubling back,
circling,
jumping high
to see where my enemy is,

warning rabbits
along the way,
I go.

I hardly touch
the ground.

And suddenly
I disappear.

Let Coyote stand there
sniffing
old jackrabbit trails.



DESERT VOICES

On the hottest
summer afternoons
when desert creatures
look for shade
and stay close to the earth
and keep their voices
low

I sit high on a cactus
and fling
my loud ringing trill
out to the sun...

So sings the Cactus Wren, one of the ten desert creatures that speaks for itself in the evocative and lyrical verses of *Desert Voices*. In both text and illustration, *Desert Voices* conveys a message of spirit and courage from the shy and quiet creatures of the beautiful desert land.

"Baylor and Parnall achieve a clarity and beauty that surpass even some of their own best work."

—*School Library Journal*

In addition to each of their numerous children's books, **Byrd Baylor** and **Peter Parnall** have collaborated on three Caldecott Honor Books: *The Desert Is Theirs*; *Hawk, I'm Your Brother*; and *The Way to Start a Day*.

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