Animals are inherently competitive. Resource allocation is the root of many a squabble (after all isn’t possession 9/10ths of the law?). Access to space, food, water, and mates ups an individual’s evolutionary fitness, that is, the potential to pass on genes. For a kingdom steeped in violent acts, why would some species willingly give up valuable resources? For the same reason- to increase the likelihood that they, or their family member, will maximize their evolutionary fitness. Playing nice and sharing is simply another strategy for survival.

Gentoo penguins court using perfect pebbles, bonobos will share food to make a friend, and even a domestic cat will leave ‘gifts’ of dead animals for its owner to reaffirm family bonds. (Side note: keep your cats indoors).

Here in the Sonoran Desert, you can find a plethora of animals who utilize those love languages. Roadrunners are notorious for nuptial gift-giving. They are opportunistic predators that feast on lizards, rodents, insects, and snakes. When a male catches a reptile, it will slam the lizard or snake on a rock or the ground to kill it. The lifeless lizard is offered to a female and if accepted, they share the scaly snack while copulating. Seems like a lot of coordination, but hey it works for them!

Additionally, many species give their gifts in the form of help, or time, or cooperative parental care. Prairie dogs have complex, though not hierarchical, social structures and advanced communication. There are even dialects and cultural differences between colonies. Prairie dogs give kisses to establish and reinforce social bonds. Bats, too, engage in mutually beneficial social behaviors such as group foraging or huddling for warmth. A bat nursery, or maternity roost, is a group of reproductive female bats that are pregnant, nursing, or weaning their babies. During foraging when most bats leave to find food, babies cuddle in clusters (called crèches) and an unrelated female bat will stay behind. These babysitters often help by guarding the colony or carrying fallen pups back up to the roost.

What do limp lizards, a bundle of bats, and fresh fecal samples have in common? Love. Well, maybe not love exactly but each can certainly be seen as an act of generosity in the animal world. Of the five love languages (words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, receiving gifts) animals exhibit each, in some way. While we humans know that nature itself is a gift, what else can we learn from the wild gift-givers in nature?
Cockroaches and termites give a different sort of gift to their young. Since cellulose (found in plants and wood) is so difficult to process, these animals have gut symbionts that break it down. Those symbionts get passed on to offspring through proctodeal excretes to get that gift of a healthy gut microbiome—get passed on to offspring through proctodeal gut symbionts that break it down. Those symbionts wood) is so difficult to process, these animals have to their young. Since cellulose (found in plants and 

To be sure, parental care, resource allocation, and communication in animals can all be seen as a way of life and not just gift-giving. But sometimes stepping back, observing nature, and appreciating the world around us is a gift itself. After all, howss the season.

Coati Kids Club spotlight
Matilda, Evelyn, and “Greenie”
Last summer, Coati Club sisters Matilda and Evelyn picked up materials to make a “caterpillar casita” to temporarily host a caterpillar and watch its lifecycle. They carefully followed the instructions to prep their casita, collect its resident—a larval white-lined sphinx moth, they dubbed “Greenie”—and its preferred food, and tend it until it pupated. A few weeks later, they delighted in the wondrous of its emergence and set Greemie free.
We love seeing the Museum through your eyes! Tag @desertmuseum and use #desertmuseum for a chance to be featured!

Hey Kids!
Show us your artwork!
Tag #desertmuseum on social media or email a picture to: education@desertmuseum.org

COLOR BY NUMBERS!

1- Blue
2- Yellow
3- Pink
4- Red
5- Green
6- Gray
7- Black

Anna’s Hummingbird

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Anna’s Hummingbird
It’s Mineral Madness time!

Dig into the rockin’ world of minerals with fun hands-on activities for families.

Visit geology and fossil activity stations where children can collect rocks, minerals, and fossils in their own egg-carton collection box. Free with Museum entrance.

Shop for your own mineral and fossil treasures at rock-bottom prices. The sale showcases rocks, minerals, and fossils from around the world.

CHECK OUT:
- Gem stones
- Rare minerals
- Fluorescent minerals
- Quartz crystals & chalcedony
- Fossilized Poop (Coprolites)
- Decorator Rock
- Plant and Rock combos

MEMBERS PREVIEW
Thursday, January 20
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

PUBLIC EVENT
Saturday, January 22
10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Sunday, January 23
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Virtual classes

Treasured legacies

Visit desertmuseum.org/visit/holidaygifts for more ideas!
The mission of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the Sonoran Desert.

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM CALENDAR
The 2022 Art Institute Calendar features the work of our students! We solicited pieces in all forms and mediums that reflect how their experiences as Art Institute students influenced their art. The result is a delightful calendar that speaks to the artistic beauty of the Museum.

$10. Purchase online, by phone at 520-883-3024, or in-person at the Ironwood Gallery and Art Institute offices. Shipping included within continental USA.

A BRUSH WITH THE DESERT
November 13, 2021 – January 16, 2022
This juried exhibition from members of the Sonoran Plein Air Painters encompasses a diversity of visual scenes and culture, echoing the wonderment of the Sonoran Desert region, from the mountains and cliffs to the smallest desert dwellers.

IRONWOOD GALLERY HOURS
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Daily

STUDENT EXHIBITION
October 29, 2021-January 9, 2022
Delight in original works by the Art Institute’s students. These unique pieces interpret the magic of the desert through a variety of mediums including mosaic, oil, scratchboard, photography and many more.

BALDWIN GALLERY HOURS
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Daily

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The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is located on the ancestral lands of the Tohono O’odham (Desert People).