Brevard County Libraries

We are shaking things up a bit with our Summer Reading Program 2021!

In this week's STEAM Packet, our theme is the Desert! We're venturing into the hot, dry plains to learn about camels. We'll explore the attributes that make them such an efficient way to travel, and learn more about the popular sport of camel racing.

STEAM Packets can be picked-up at any branch within Brevard County and are available for curbside service.

All STEAM Packets are developed to be take-home based projects. Most supplies will not be provided by the library and will be listed only as 'Supplies Needed.'

Brevard COUNTY Libraries

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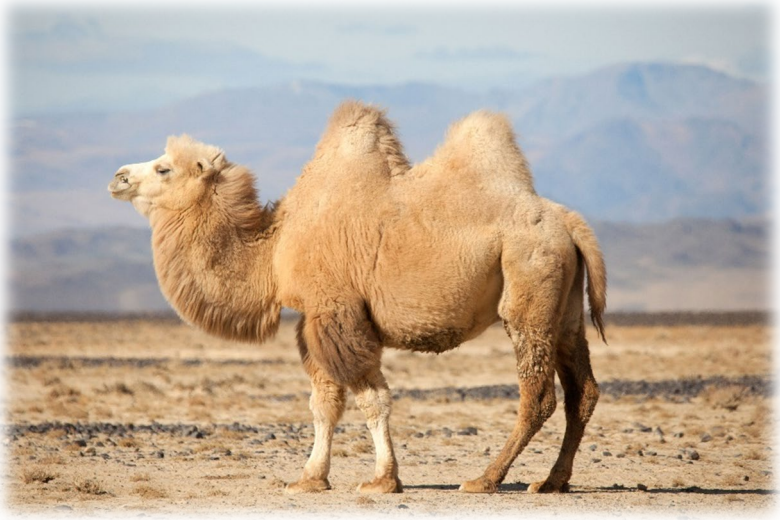
Storytime, STEAM, Craft, and Teen Packets developed by the Youth Services Department

The Desert Biome



The Desert Biome

Imagine a dry, barren place where the sunshine is harsh, the nights are cold, and there is hardly ever any rain. It is a wide open plain, made up of sand dunes or hard, rocky ground, where travel is not easy. You won't find water for miles. Because of this rare type of environment, the plants and animals found here are unlike any across the globe. They've had to adapt in creative ways.

Deserts are found in many countries, but only make up one fifth of the entire Earth's surface. There are four types of Deserts: Hot and Dry, Semiarid, Coastal, and Cold. (Yes, there are such things as cold deserts! Antarctica is one of them!) You won't find many large mammals, due to their lack of ability to store water, and because there isn't much shelter or shade for them to get away from the sun. Instead, there are mostly small, nocturnal mammals, reptiles, and insects that live in this ecosystem. The few plants you will find here are either types of shrubs, or plants like the cactus, which are able to store water.

There is, however, a certain large mammal that is a very well-known Desert dweller. This animal is the Camel. They are easily identified by their hump (or humps), which are used to store water in their bodies for several days to keep them hydrated. Many parts of their body have adaptations to help them survive in the extreme conditions of the Desert, such as: large, flat hooves, long eyelashes, and nostrils that can open and close.

Camel Racing

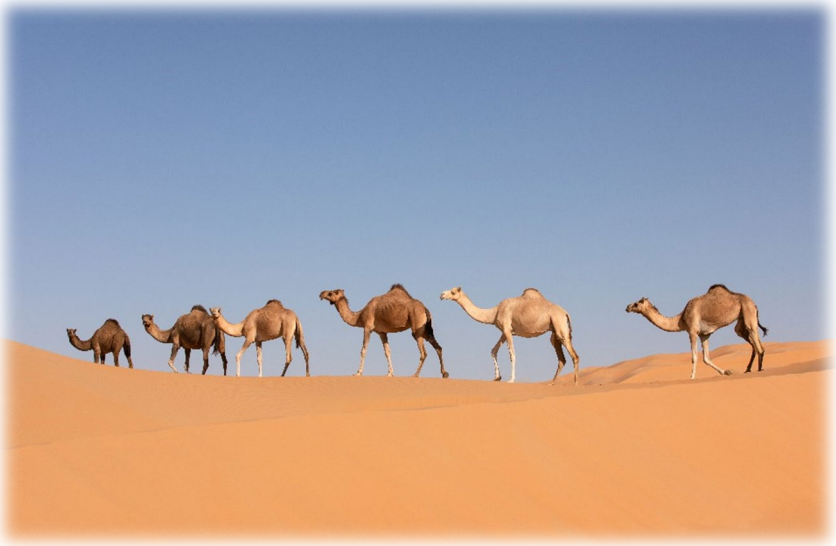
Camel racing is very similar to horse racing, the obvious difference being camels rather than horses! Camel racing is a popular sport throughout regions such as Western Asia, North Africa, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Australia. The sport can be traced back as early as the 7th Century CE. The Camels used for racing are Dromedary camels. These camels can run up to 40 miles per hour! Their bodies are built to endure long distance travel, and their sturdy hooves help to navigate the sandy ground.

Suggested Reads: Books available through your library!

"Camels are Awesome!" by Allan Morey

“Camels” by Kathryn Stevens
"The Wooden Camel” by Wanuri Kahiu
"Desert" by Sheila Rivera
"Desert Animals” by Mark Carwardine
“Desert Biomes Around the World” by M.M. Eboch
“The Desert Alphabet Book” by Jerry Pallotta

Camel Race Experiment



Supplies Needed:

Piece of cardboard or sturdy card paper, straw, scissors, tape, ribbon or string, white paper, pencil.

Optional Supplies:

Washi tape, watercolor paints or markers, colored paper.

Predictions:

What do you think will happen?

Do you think your camel will reach all the way to the end of the string?

Will the camel move faster on the string with more weight on it, or slower?
Bonus: In real life, do you think a camel would move faster or slower with more weight on it?

If racing against siblings or friends, predict whose camel will be the fastest and travel the furthest!

Directions:

This activity is intended for you to do at home with your family.

1. Draw or trace an outline of a camel onto your piece of cardboard or card paper.
2. Cut a small, square piece of white paper (or colored paper) and decorate it with watercolor paint or markers to resemble the blanket/riding pad that the camel riders sit on.
3. Next, cut another piece of white paper into the shape of a saddle and tape it to one side of your camel. Then, fold your “blanket” over the camel’s hump (on top of the saddle).
4. Cut a small piece of a straw (about 1 inch) and tape it to the other side of your camel.
5. Next, cut a length of string or ribbon. This is what your camel will glide on. You can hold one end and someone else hold the other end, or tape one end to a wall while you hold up the other end. Note: if two people are racing at the same time, cut two pieces of string the same size.
6. Place a small length of the ribbon or string through the piece of straw on your camel. Don’t let the camel go yet. Make sure all camels in the race are lined up, placed at the top of the string.
7. Race! Hold up your end of the string, and let your camels go!

Race Results: announce the winner, and measure how far each camel went!

Try changing certain parts of your experiment. Hold the string higher, try giving the camels a light push, or add weight to them. See what makes them go faster and further!

Reflection:

Write your response down for the following questions:

Other than its hump to store water, what other adaptations do Camels have? How do those adaptations help them survive in the Desert?

Which type of Camel has one hump? And which type of Camel has two humps?

Why do you think smaller animals are more common in the Desert than large animals?

How do we, as humans, protect ourselves from sunlight?

Why is it necessary for plants and animals to adapt to an environment?