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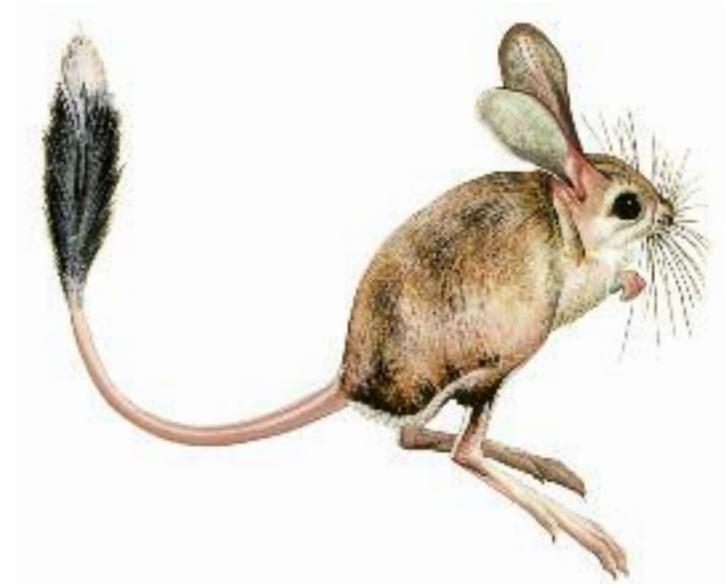
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see how we live

# Desert Animals



 Orpheus

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## Desert animals

The baking desert may seem the last place you would expect to find animals. Deserts are barren with very few plants and almost no water. So those of us who do manage to live in them have to find ways to keep cool and get whatever food we can. You can read about how we do this in this book.



## How do animals survive in the desert?

I am a fennec fox, and, like a lot of animals that live in the desert, I need to be able to keep cool. I hide from the heat of the day in my burrow, only coming out at night to hunt. My large ears help me cool down, as I give out a lot of body heat through them. I don't need to drink much. I get most of my water from my food.

I am an addax, a type of antelope, and I live here in the Sahara Desert. I go through most of my life without drinking. I get all the water I need from dew and the plants I eat—mainly grass and leaves. I usually feed at night when it's cooler, and rest during the heat of the day.



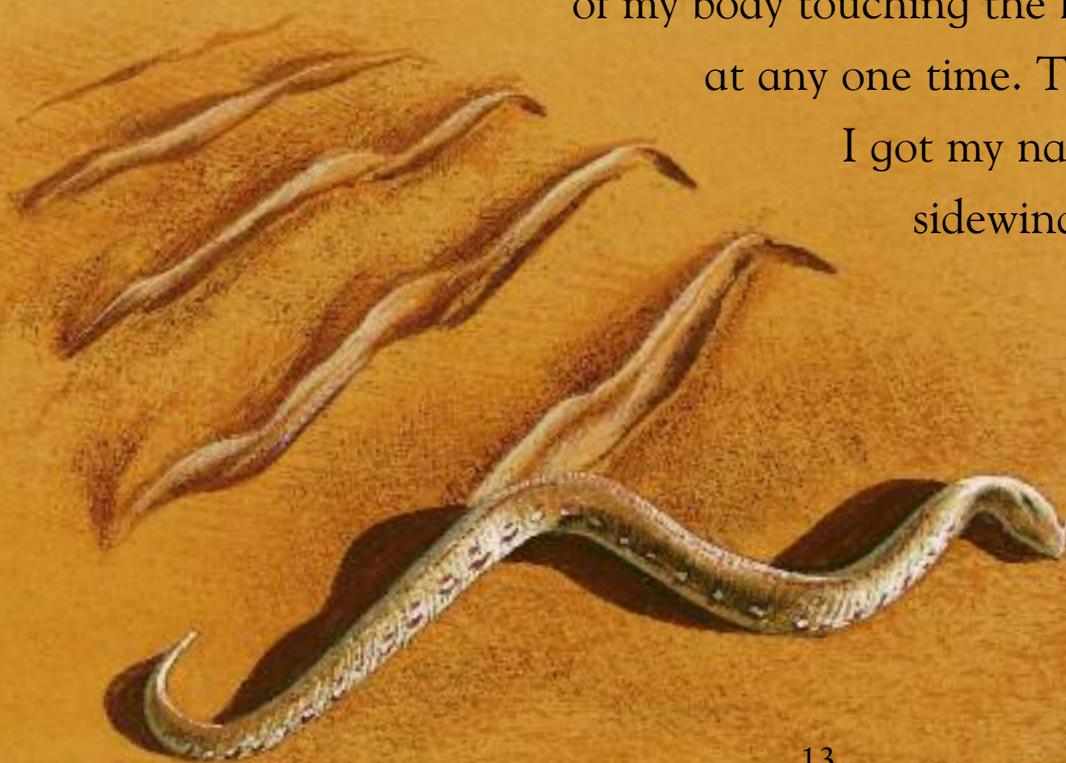


I am a male sandgrouse from Central Asia. There is no water here for my chicks, so every day I fly up to 25 kilometres to find a waterhole. Here I soak my breast feathers with water. Then I fly back to my chicks and they drink the water from my feathers.

I need to drink a lot of water, too. I feed entirely on seeds which are very dry. I swallow small pebbles and bits of grit to help grind up the hard dry seeds. Just after dawn, a great flock of us fly to the nearest waterhole to drink.



Believe it or not, I am a snake—a horned viper. When it gets too hot here in the desert, I bury myself in the sand, so all you can see is the top of my head. Just a little way down beneath the sand's hot surface, it is nice and cool. The sand also protects me from the sun's rays.



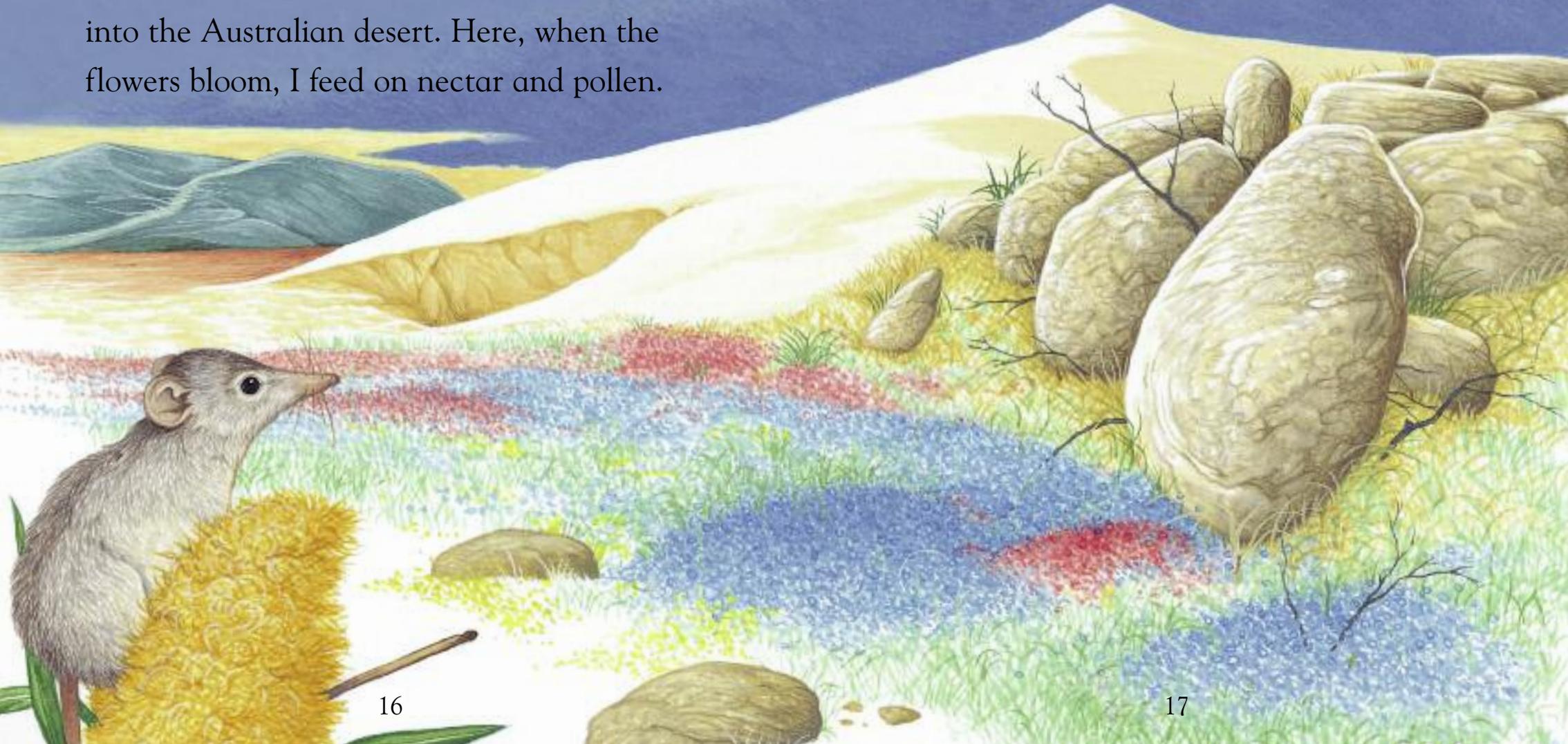
The desert is a harsh place for all us snakes. The surface of the sand can get burning hot by the middle of the day, making it painful to move over it. My winding method of moving means I only have one small patch of my body touching the hot sand at any one time. That's how I got my name: sidewinder.

A jerboa like me escapes the heat by resting underground during the day. I come out at night to feed. To stop me getting too hot, I lose heat from my large ears and naked tail.



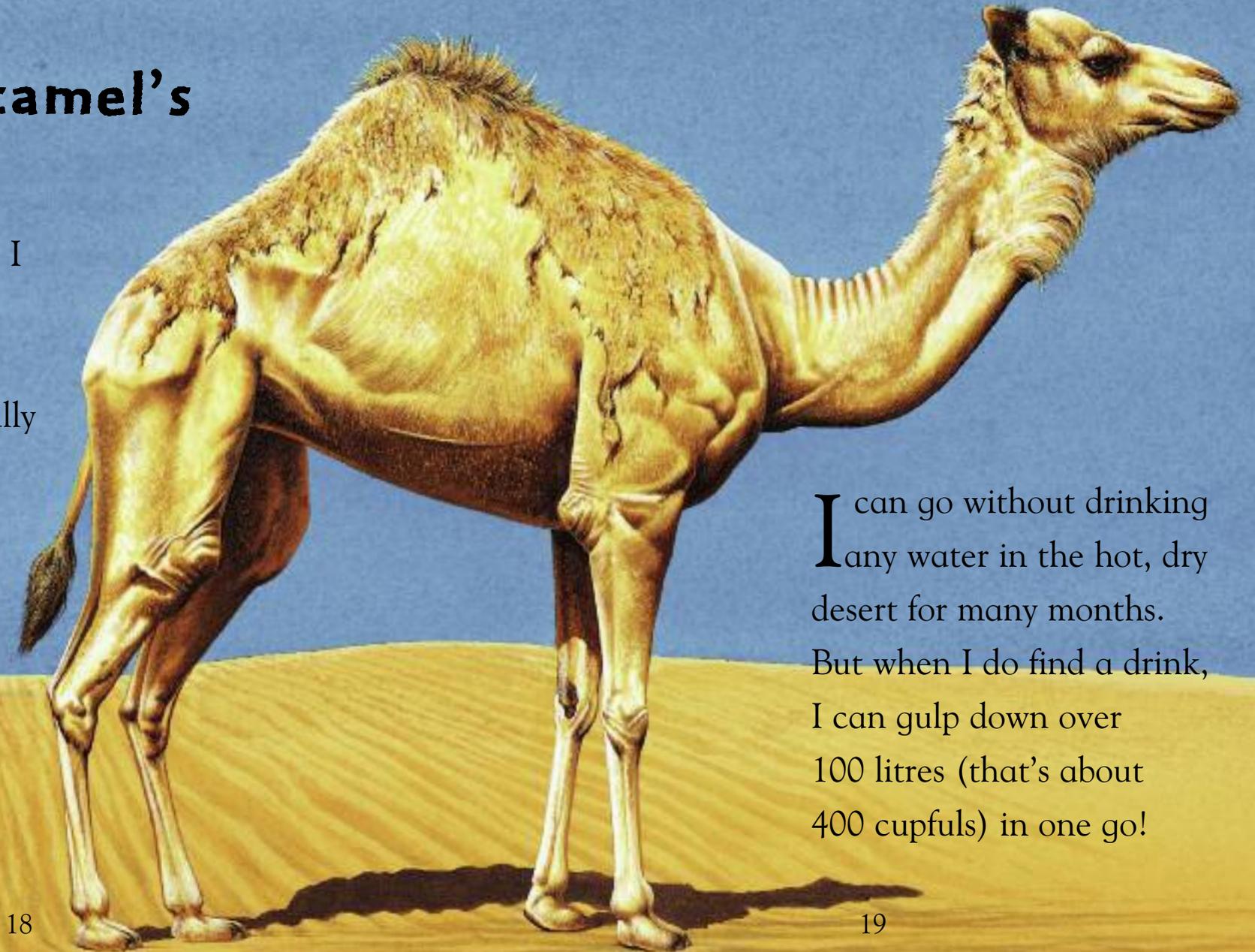
We dung beetles stay underground during the heat of the day. When it is cooler we come out to feed on the waste left behind by other animals. We also roll up quite large balls of dung to lay our eggs in.

If you're a tiny honey possum like me, you'll wait until night falls before venturing out into the Australian desert. Here, when the flowers bloom, I feed on nectar and pollen.



## What is a camel's hump for?

Some people think I store water in my hump. But this is not true. My hump actually contains fat that my body can use as food when it is scarce.



I can go without drinking any water in the hot, dry desert for many months. But when I do find a drink, I can gulp down over 100 litres (that's about 400 cupfuls) in one go!



**M**y broad, two-toed feet, have cushioned pads that spread out when I put my feet on the ground. These support me on the loose sand so that I don't sink in. I can walk 40 kilometres a day across the hot desert.

**I** have a double row of very long eyelashes  
fringing my eyes. But these are not for show.  
They actually stop the sand from blowing into  
my eyes. I can also close my nostrils to stop  
the sand from getting up my nose.



## Why do desert locusts swarm?

When the rains come to our dry desert, plants grow very quickly, and soon there are lots of new shoots to eat. We locusts want to make the most of this opportunity.



We breed very quickly and, in just a couple of weeks, we increase our numbers many thousands of times over. We gather together in large groups. As you can see, we are very brightly coloured. With so many of us, we don't need to camouflage ourselves from attackers.





**W**hen we first hatch we have no wings and are called hoppers. We march along the ground, eating the new young shoots in our path and banding together with other hoppers. There can be hundreds of thousands of us in these groups.



**W**e shed our skin every now and then so that we can grow. This is called moulting. After moulting about five times, we get our wings and become adults. We are pale coloured and soft when we have moulted. Our bright colours come later as our skin hardens.

**N**ow that we have wings, we can take to the air. We swarm in our millions. We roost in trees during the heat of the day then fly off in search of new food in the mornings and evenings. We can eat our own weight in food every day. When a swarm finds a good place to feed, we will strip it completely bare of all grass and leaves in a matter of minutes. There can be 200 million of us.



**W**e take off by thrusting ourselves into the air with our powerful back legs.



We are very strong flyers and can travel more than 100 kilometres in a single day.



When we swarm like this, nothing can stop us. There are simply too many of us. This poor boy can only look on helplessly as we fly across his land. We shall eat all of his tribe's crops—and much more besides.

The noise our wings make as we swarm sounds like distant thunder and can be heard many kilometres away.



