

FALL ...TRANSITION

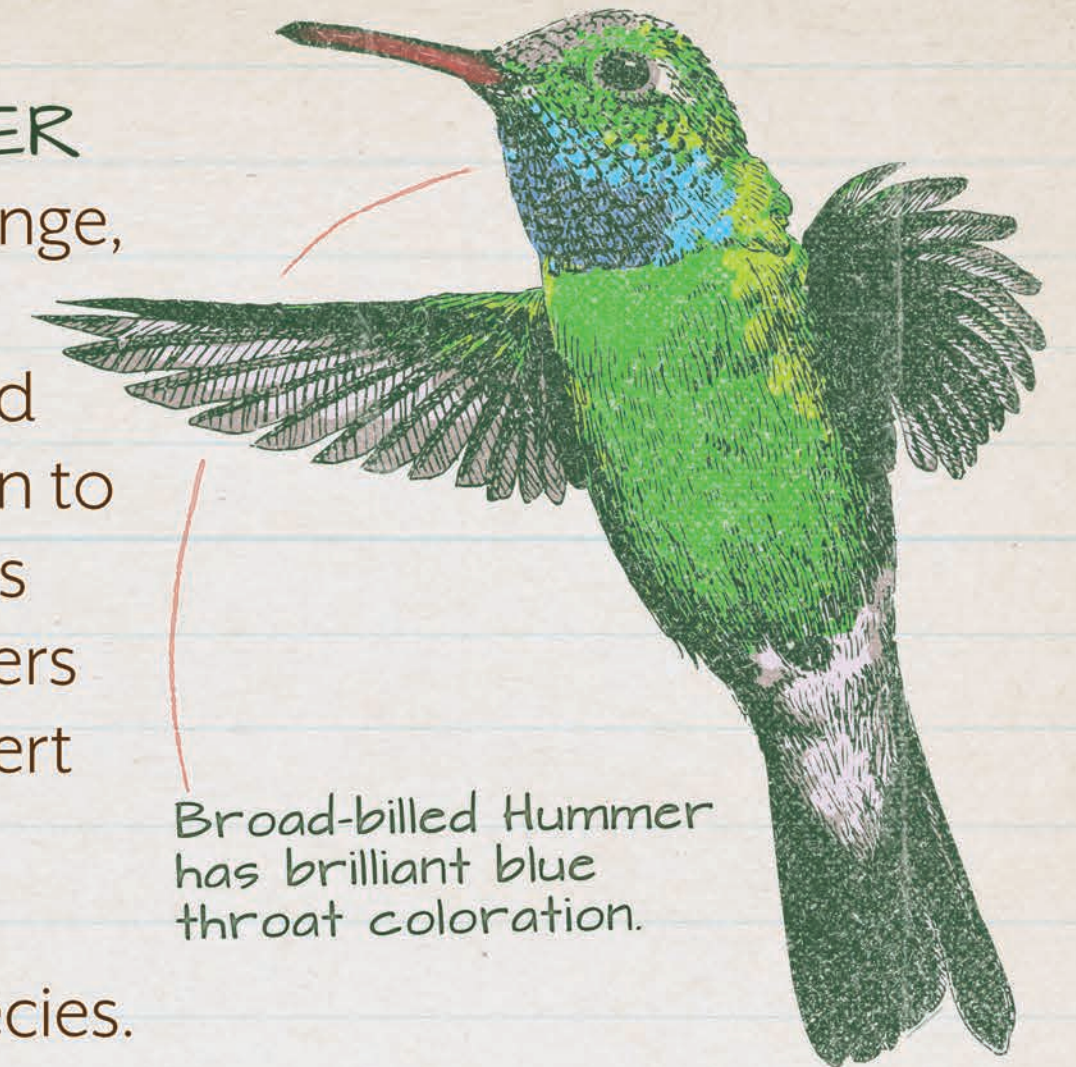
FALL CATCHES US BY SURPRISE.

Somehow we make it through the heat of one summer and the humidity of the other, and then suddenly the days are shorter, nights are cooler and the air is drier. The desert is making its transition to winter, and the color clues are all around us — the leaves of wild cotton are rusty and the seed heads of native grasses such as purple threeawn, blue grama and deer grass dip and sway in autumn breezes as their bunched stems shimmer bronze, purple and mauve in the late afternoon sun.

DEER GRASS
PURPLE THREEAWN

RAIN DECLINES DRAMATICALLY after monsoon summer, but late fall precipitation is critical for a generous wildflower bloom in the spring. Rain from disintegrating tropical Pacific storms that water the desert can fulfill our annual dream of carpets of color come February

FROM MID-SEPTEMBER THROUGH NOVEMBER many plants are still active and blooming. The red-orange, nectar-filled flowers of *Zauschneria*, aptly named "hummingbird trumpet," are visited daily by Rufous and Broad-billed Hummingbirds making their own transition to warmer climes. The bright green of turpentine bush has been overtaken by densely packed, brassy yellow flowers attractive to both butterflies and bees. And across desert washes and vacant lots, desert broom is in bloom. A menace to gardeners and allergy sufferers alike, this tougher-than-nails native feeds dozens of butterfly species.



Broad-billed Hummer has brilliant blue throat coloration.



SOUTHERN ARIZONA'S BATS are also on the move, insect-eating Mexican free-tails and nectar-feeding lesser long-noses, escorting this year's youngsters south and emptying hummingbird feeders overnight.

BUSTED! - A lesser long-nosed bat raiding a hummingbird feeder!

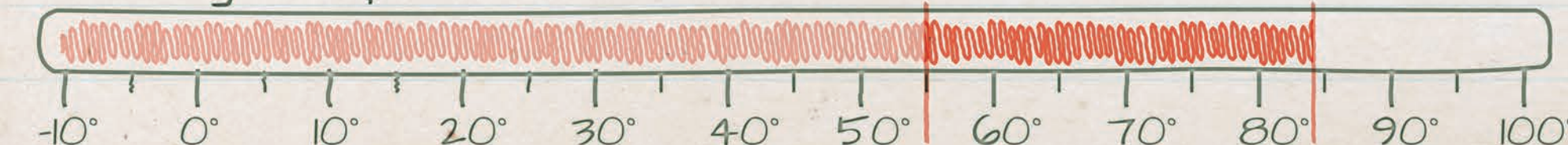
A LAST HURRAH!

Look for butterflies at puddle parties (mining salts and minerals from the evaporating water), sipping nectar from still abundant flowers, or pairing up and laying eggs to ensure another generation. Some species migrate, others overwinter as eggs, caterpillars or pupae.

PUDDLE PARTY!!! ->



Fall Avg. Temperature - 55°F (13°C) to 84°F (29°C)



Average Precipitation 2.76" (70.1 mm)

