

WINTER...HIBERNATION



DESERT MARIGOLD
Silver grey foliage
bright yellow blossoms.

FROM DECEMBER TO MID-FEBRUARY the desert takes a much deserved break. Color is in short supply, but persistent perennials like desert marigold and dyssodia continue to bloom with even a little encouragement. All twiggy stems, chuparosa beckons resident hummingbirds with its crimson flowers, and rhyolite bush, the desert's mock-orange, shares fragrant white flowers. Cool season grasses like purple threeawn and deergrass "green up" with the winter moisture, and wildflower seedlings sprouted in the fall thrive. The few remaining flowers on desert milkweed continue to play host to permanent-resident queen butterflies.

A KILLER STALKS the coldest region of the Sonoran Desert. Hard freezes are common and snow is not unfamiliar, even on the valley floors. For plants with tropical origins, like saguaros, cold is a limiting factor, determining just how far north they can survive.



WINTER MEANS COOL, MILD WEATHER, and a second chance at significant rain. Storms arise over the Pacific Ocean and are blown eastward into a wall of low pressure over the western states that sends them up and over the mountains of California to the desert beyond. Unlike our isolated, flash-bang summer storms, these are widespread, unhurried, soaking rains often coming in one gentle storm after the other.

CACTUS WRENS are nest building, and not just for the upcoming breeding season. An extra nest is a great place to sleep on a cold winter's night. Anna's Hummingbirds get a jump start on raising babies, sometimes as early as December.

Nest in a
choilla cactus.



RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP

Desert mistletoe steals water and nutrients from desert trees, but it is its relationship with the Phainopepla that ensures its survival. Ripe mistletoe berries are prized by the birds who return the favor by spreading the sticky seeds from tree to tree.

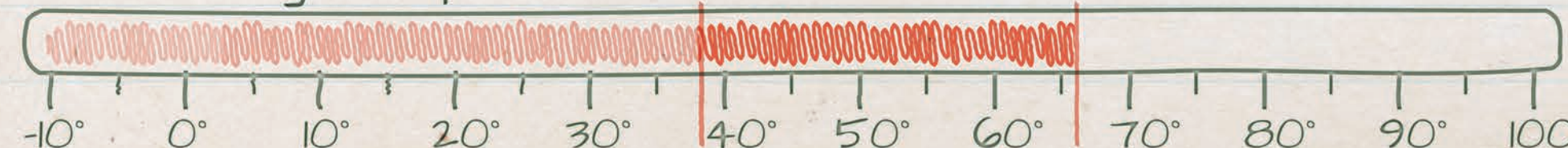


PHAINOPEPLA
Deep black plumage
and striking red eyes.



MISTLETOE
Silver grey foliage
pale red berries.

Winter Avg. Temperature - 38°F (3°C) to 66°F (19°C)



Average
Precipitation
2.63"
(66.8 mm)

