Desert ecosystem with flora and fauna by Annphilip

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When we think about a desert the images that pass through our mind will be sand dunes, cactus and camel. Most of us consider it as a barren land with barely any life. Among various ecosystems in the planet, the desert ecosystem is one of the diverse one with a variety of flora and fauna. Plants and animals that can face tough conditions can survive there. Thatâ€™s why we canâ€™t find so many plants and animals as we see in savannas and rainforest.

If we have to give an exact definition to a desert, then we can say deserts are regions where annual precipitation not exceeds more than 10 inches per year. Moreover, the desert sand wonâ€™t have the capacity to hold water for a long time. Based on certain characteristics, we can classify desert biomes into four. They are hot and dry, semiarid, coastal and cold.

Hot and dry desert â€“ In hot and dry deserts the summer will be very hot and generally warm in other seasons. Mean annual temperature will be in the range of 20 to 25 degree Celsius, while maximum extreme temperature ranges from 44 to 49 degree Celsius. Some of the major hot and dry deserts in America are great Basin, Mojave, Sonoran and Chihuahuan.

Semiarid desert â€“ Here summer season will be long and dry, while winter season will bring low concentration of rainfall. Average annual rainfall will be 2-4 cm. Temperatures will be in and around 40 degree Celsius in the day time and nearly 10 degree Celsius in the evening. Animals and plants restore their moisture lost from transpiration, sweating and breathing in the evening. Some of the major semiarid deserts include Great Basin, Montana and the sagebrush of Utah.

Coastal desert â€“ In coastal deserts summer will be moderately long and warm, and winter will be cool. The temperature during summer season will be in the range of 13 to 24 degree Celsius. In the winter, temperature can be 5 degree Celsius or below. The desert will receive an average rainfall of 8 to 13 cm. Coastal desert has a fine textured sand with a moderate sand content. Plants with long root system thrive well in the desert. Atacama of Chile is the best example of coastal desert.

Cold desert- As the name indicates, the dessert will have heavy or normal rainfall throughout the winter and snow fall towards the end of the season. In the summer season, the desert will get occasional rainfall. The mean winter temperature will be between -2 and 4 degree Celsius and the mean summer temperature will be in the range of 21 to 26 degree Celsius. The soil found in cold desert will be heavy.

This type of deserts occurs in the Nearctic, Greenland and Antartic realm.

Dessert ecosystem animals- Animals found in desert regions will be nocturnal carnivores. Major animals are kangaroo rats, rabbits, skunks, kangaroo mice, pocket mice, and grasshopper mice and antelope ground squirrels. Other animals include insects, mammals like coyote and badger and toads. Commonly found birds are great horned owl, bald eagle and golden eagle. Lizards and snakes are the usually found reptile varieties.

Dessert ecosystem plants â€“ Long rooted shrubs and short woody trees will grow in desert climate. Among Cactus plants, barrel cactus, crimson hedgehog cactus, pancake prickly pear cactus, saguaro cactus are the abundantly found varieties. Other varieties of plants include ocotillo, turpentine bush, false mesquite, yuccas and agaves. These plants are able to survive in tough conditions, because they have modified themselves to sustain in the desert climate. When some plants store water in specialized tissues, others have small leaves with hair like structure to retain

moisture. The flowers of some desert plants are really beautiful and we can watch some of these on television channels powered by ATT digital TV.

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Ann is a freelancer. She is interested in writing about different ecosystems. She watches programs related to ecosystem and different flora and fauna on her home television connected to a ATT digital TV.

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