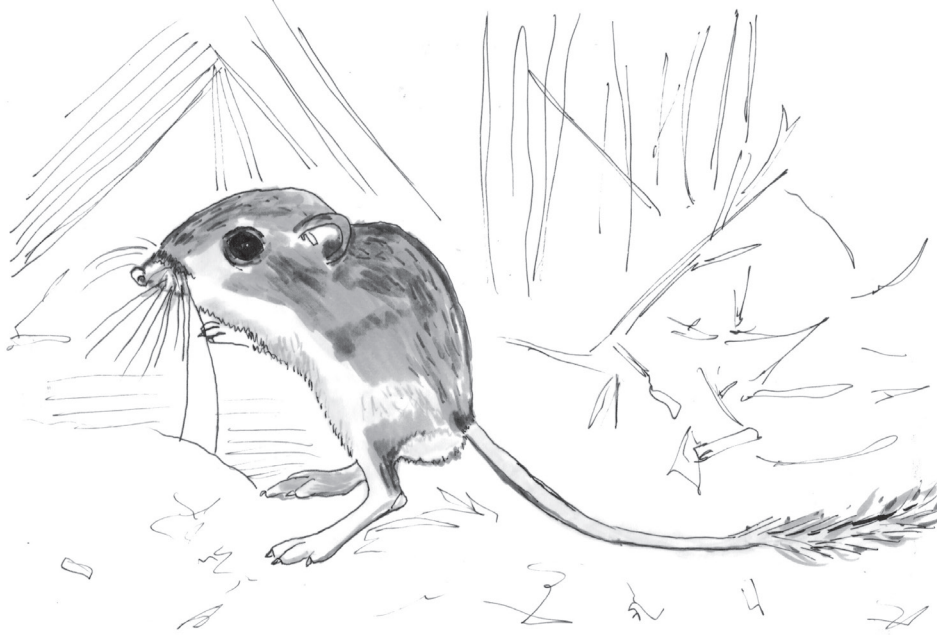


The Story of a Kangaroo Rat

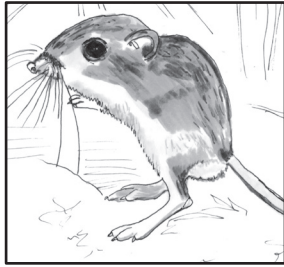


Daytime temperatures in California's Mojave Desert can get very hot. A kangaroo rat rests inside his burrow to keep cool. He dug his burrow and its surrounding tunnels into the ground under a large cactus plant.

The kangaroo rat sleeps away most of the day. He waits for nightfall, when outside temperatures will be cooler.

The kangaroo rat leaves his burrow just as the moon rises in the night sky. His large and powerful hind legs support his whole body. His front legs are much shorter and weaker. As he hops out into the night, he looks like a tiny kangaroo.

The Story of a Kangaroo Rat



The kangaroo rat hops off in search of seeds, his main diet. The seeds in the Mojave Desert tend to be very small. He stuffs hundreds of them in his cheek pouches, using them like shopping bags to carry

his food home with him. Back at home, the rat uses his front paws to push the seeds out of his mouth. Then he covers them with sand.

The kangaroo rat may sleep most of the day. But he has very good hearing. If he hears a small noise, he'll jump up, wide awake. Tonight he hears a small scraping noise. He sniffs the air. It's a snake! If the snake comes inside his burrow, the rat will be trapped with no escape. He goes outside to try to chase the snake away.

It's a gopher snake. The kangaroo rat warns the snake by stomping his foot. Stomp, stomp, stomp. Stomp, stomp, stomp. Nope, that's not working, it's time to try kicking some sand. The kangaroo rat uses his strong hind legs to kick sand in the snake's face. Sand in the eyes hurts and the snake doesn't like that at all. The snake slithers away from this sandy punishment. Victorious, the kangaroo rat is safe for another day. Time to go back to his burrow and eat his buried seeds.

