

Descriptions with Pictures

Name _____

Benjamin Butler Harris, *The Gila Trail*, pages 77-78

“Next day, soon after starting down the river valley for San Xavier, forty miles distant, on a bench [mesa] to the left, I thought I had found a desert treasure in the shape of a pillar standing amid ruins. Approaching, I could not but admire its tall, columnar, beautifully tapering shaft, with two graceful arms pulling out opposite to each other.

Nearer, I noticed it was elaborately fluted and carved with long shiny spines protruding ‘like quills of fretful porcupine.’ When presto!, it was found to be a subject of the vegetable kingdom, it came upon my mind as a natural wonder, an astonishing ‘what-is-it?’”



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Name _____

William W. Hunter, “Diary-Journal, 1849,” page 107

“Two of our men killed and presented to me a singular looking animal of the lizard genus. Its color on the back is a rusty black, variegated with irregular lines and figures of pale yellow. Its belly of the same colors the white or pale yellow predominating and tinged with a shade of pink. Its tail, short and thick, is marked with patches and irregular rings. The lips are jet-black, as well as the throat and lower extremities of the legs. These have each five toes armed with talons. The mouth is enormously large armed with transparent teeth formed like fangs, through which I thought I could distinguish a line of light, denoting them to be tubes, and a thick tongue forked at the point. Its eyes were black. The skin is thick and looks as though it were beaded, the beads touching and raised to half their height.”



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mountain-prairie.fws.gov

Name _____

William W. Hunter, “Diary-Journal, 1849,” pages 116-117

“We saw a bird called by the natives, ‘gayta’ whose form resembles our blue jay with a head and neck as large as (that) of a turkey. The plumage like that of the Western Pheasant, with two circular bare patches on the back of the head of a vermilion color, lying parallel with the eyes – beak black, 3 inches long, and terminating in a hooked point. Wings very short and disproportionate to the size of the body. Their color black with a shade of invisible green, and striped with three rows of oblong white spots, extending across the fore part of the feather. Tail twice the length of the body, color invisible green tipped with white, and near its insertion overlaid by a coat of short feathers of a plum color, fringed around their edges with white. Body, the size of a duck, mouse colored on the back, breast and under part fawn colored. Legs very long and of great muscular power.”



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www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov



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Name _____

William Tallack, *First Overland Mail*, page 143-144

“It has no leaves, in the ordinary sense of the word, but consists of a lofty, straight, spiny, grooved, and dull green shaft from twenty to fifty feet in height and from one to two feet in diameter. From half way up this shaft, two opposite branches diverge at right angles and, taking another bend, also at right angles, grow parallel to the main trunk, which they resemble in nature and thickness. Though the general appearance somewhat resembles a huge branched candelabra-stand, there is great diversity of size and form; some being like a pump, others assuming the aspect of a tall man stretching out his arms in making a public address; whilst others are simple, unbranched fluted columns, . . .”



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The Gila Trail
June 25, 1849

Dear _____,

I hope you are well. On the Gila Trail today, I saw a very strange
(animal/plant). It had _____

Sincerely,

