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John Alcock knows the Sonoran Desert better than just about anyone else, and in this book he tracks the changes he observes in plant and animal life over the course of a drought year. Combining scientific knowledge with years of exploring the desert, he describes the variety of ways in which the wait for rain takes place\_and what happens when it finally comes.

The desert is a land of five seasons, featuring two summers\_hot, dry months followed by monsoon\_and Alcock looks at the changes that take place in an entire desert community over the course of all five. He describes what he finds on hikes in the Userly Mountains near Phoenix, where he has studied desert life over three decades and where frequent visits have enabled him to notice effects of seasonal variation that might escape a casual glance.

Blending a personal perspective with field observation, Alcock shows how desert ecology depends entirely on rainfall. He touches on a wide range of topics concerning the desert's natural history, noting the response of saguaro flowers to heat and the habits of predators, whether soaring red-tailed hawk or tiny horned lizard. He also describes unusual aspects of insects that few desert hikers will have noticed, such as the disruptive color pattern of certain grasshoppers that is more effective than most camouflage.

When the Rains Come is brimming with new insights into the desert, from the mating behaviors of insects to urban sprawl, and features photographs that document changes in the landscape as drought years come and go. It brings us the desert in the harshest of times\_and shows that it is still teeming with life.