Subsitute for first paragraph of notes on Baja

My interest in deserts came about indirectly through my introduction to the writings of Joseph Wood Krutch in The Twelve Seasons, a beautifully written little book about Connecticut country, not deserts. It led to an association with Krutch in In Wildness on Thoreau and to the discovery of his Desert Year and Voice of the Desert two books no less delightful than the first. During the course of later visits with Krutch I learned about his journeys into Baja California by plane and truck and stored away in my mind what he told me about this wild and largely inaccessable peninsula. His descriptions of the exotic vegetation that somehow had become adapted to the most austere climatic conditions, of hidden springs high on bare brown mountains, and of the blue coves with sandy beaches tucked away along the shore where the immense rocky bones of the peninsula's geological skeleton plunge into the Sea of Cortez, whetted my apetite for this kind of terrain and I determined to make the excursion someday myself. The occasion arose sooner than I had dreamed possible. The projectjwas at first a substitute for an even more ambitious one, but after the first few days in Baja's relentless atmosphere developed a momentum all its own. The project for which the trip to Baja was a substitute was an expedition to the Galapagos Islands which had to be postponed, so that Baja was undertaken as a sort of trial run in a similar kind of arid country. At first I did not guess that Baja California would come to occupy an independent position in my thinking, or that out of this trial expedition would arise the desire to return, to see more of it in more detail and at another time of year. I did not think then that I would ever publisher a book on it.