



THE SAGEBRUSH STEPPE



MAMMALS

1. Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)
2. Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)
3. White-tailed Prairie Dog (*Cynomys leucurus*)
4. White-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*)
5. Pygmy Rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*)
6. Sagebrush vole (*Lemmiscus curtatus*)
7. Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

8. Great Basin Spadefoot Toad (*Spea intermontana*)
9. Sagebrush Lizard (*Sceloporus graciosus*)
10. Short Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma hernandesi*)
11. Prairie Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*)

BIRDS

12. Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)
13. Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)
14. Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*)
15. Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*)
16. Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*)
17. Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

INSECTS

18. Harvester Ant (*Pogonomyrmex* sp.)
19. Darkling Beetle (*Eleodes hispilabris*)
20. Hera Moth (*Hemileuca hera*)

OTHER

32. Bacteria
33. Fungus

PLANTS

21. Wyoming Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* var. *wyomingensis*)
22. Mountain Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* var. *varvaseyana*)
23. Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*)
24. Western Wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*)
25. Needle and Thread Grass (*Hesperostipa comata*)
26. Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*)

27. Plains Pricklypear (*Opuntia polycantha*)
28. Scarlet Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*)
29. Tapertip Hawksbeard (*Crepis acuminata*)
30. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* var. *lanulosa*)
31. Purple Milkvetch (*Astragalus* spp.)

SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAGE BRUSH STEPPE ECOSYSTEM

A TYPE OF GRASSLAND THAT DOESN'T HAVE TREES, IS HOT AND DRY IN THE SUMMER, IS COLD AND WINDY IN THE WINTER, HAS A HIGH ELEVATION, AND IS MOSTLY FLAT. DOES THAT SOUND LIKE PLACES YOU KNOW IN WYOMING? ALMOST HALF OF THE STATE OF WYOMING IS CONSIDERED A SAGEBRUSH STEPPE ECOSYSTEM.

CAN YOU FIND

A **FOOD CHAIN**?

For example : Badger > Prairie Dog > Western Wheatgrass

A **PLANT THAT HAS SPINES** INSTEAD OF LEAVES?

AN **ANIMAL THAT SHAKES THE TIP OF ITS TAIL AS A WARNING**?

VOCABULARY

HABITAT
ECOSYSTEM
SPECIES
FOOD CHAIN

All living things need a **HABITAT** or a place where they can find shelter, food, water, and have space to move, live, and reproduce. Your shelter might be a house, a mobile home, or an apartment. You go to the grocery store to get food and your water comes out of a faucet.

SO HOW DO PLANTS AND ANIMALS LIVE IN THIS ECOSYSTEM?

Plants that live there, like sagebrush, use the plentiful sunlight to make its food. Many plants will store water when it is available so that they can survive times when it is dry. Animals, like the pronghorn and the sage-grouse, depend on sagebrush for food, shelter, and even water that is stored in the plant.

To humans, the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem can look empty, without any life at all. When you take a closer look at these large open areas covered with sagebrush, grasses and other plants, you can see that there are actually quite a lot of animals who call the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem their home or habitat.

In fact, 400 types or **SPECIES** of plants provide habitat, food, and even water for over 250 species of animals.

THE GREATER SAGE GROUSE

SCIENTIFIC NAME :
*Centrocercus
urophasianus*

HABITAT :
Foothills, plains and
mountain slopes where sagebrush is present.

DIET :
Feeds on vegetation, especially sagebrush
in the winter; forbs (flowering plants); and
insects.

NATURAL HISTORY :
Males display for females on dancing grounds
known as leks. The females visit the leks to
find a mate then nest at the base of a nearby
sagebrush plant. Females lay between 7-13
eggs, which are brown with dark spots. Eggs
hatch after 27 days and the chicks are able
to fly for short distances after approximately
one week.

COOL FACT :
The booming sounds that males make with
the air sacs on their chest can be heard a
mile away!



THE PRONGHORN

SCIENTIFIC NAME :
*Antilocapra
americana*

HABITAT :
Shrublands,
great plains and
sagebrush-grasslands.

DIET :
Feeds on shrubby plants, especially
sagebrush; forbs in the spring and summer;
some grasses.

NATURAL HISTORY :
Also known as antelope, they are distantly
related to goats and bison. Females can give
birth to twins. Because they live in open
country, pronghorn have excellent eyesight
allowing them to see and then escape danger
from a long distance.

COOL FACT :
Although the cheetah is often called the
fastest land mammal, the pronghorn can
sprint as fast as 60 mph and can sustain a
speed of 30 mph for miles!



THE SHORT HORNED LIZARD

SCIENTIFIC NAME :
*Phrynosoma
hernandesii*

HABITAT :
Grasslands,
sagebrush-grasslands.

DIET :
Feeds on ants, beetles, grasshoppers and
other insects.

NATURAL HISTORY :
Although they are sometimes called
“horny toads”, these lizards are not
amphibians like frogs, but reptiles. Named
the state reptile of Wyoming in 1993, the
“horns” found on this lizard are actually
modified scales. The females can give live
birth to a large litter, with reports of up to
50 young. However, most studies list litter
sizes of 5-30.

COOL FACT :
In order to ward off predators, they can
inflate their bodies up to twice their size.

