

## Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem

Grazing buffalo, deer, pronghorn and burrowing mammals are the iconic animals of this landscape. However, the grasses are the real star of this ecosystem. Without the grasses, we'd have no plant or animal life, just dust.



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## Name: American Badger

Scientific Name: *Taxidea taxus*

Predators: Coyotes, fox, mountain lions, wolves, raptors, humans

Prey or Food: Burrowing mammals, eggs, insects

### DID YOU KNOW?

Many animals depend on abandoned badger holes for shelter.



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## Name: Black-tailed Jackrabbit

Scientific Name: *Lepus townsendii*

Predators: Coyotes, fox, mountain lions, wolves, raptors

Prey or Food: Plant matter

### DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to hearing, the long ears of this rabbit help to keep body temperatures cool.



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## Name: Swift Fox

Scientific Name: *Vulpes velox*

Predators: Coyotes, humans

Prey or Food: Rabbits, small rodents, birds, berries

### DID YOU KNOW?

Pairs court for months before settling on a lifelong mate.



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Name: Northern Pocket Gopher

Scientific Name: *Thomomys talpoides*

Predators: Badger, fox

Prey or Food: Underground plant parts

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Named for its fur-lined cheek pocket it uses to store food.



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Name: Ferruginous Hawk

Scientific Name: *Buteo regalis*

Predators: Larger Raptors, mammals and snakes (eggs)

Prey or Food: Burrowing mammals, rabbits, birds, reptiles

**DID YOU KNOW?**

This is North America's largest hawk, it has a wingspan of almost 5 feet.



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Name: Short-eared Owl

Scientific Name: *Asio flammeus*

Predators: Raptors, large mammals

Prey or Food: Small mammals, other birds

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Unlike most owls, short-eared owls nest on the ground.



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Name: Western Meadowlark

Scientific Name: *Sturnella neglecta*

Predators: Raptors, large mammals, reptiles

Prey or Food: Insects

**DID YOU KNOW?**

This is Wyoming's "State Bird".



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## Name: Lark Bunting

Scientific Name: *Eremophila alpestris*  
Predators: Raptors, large mammals, reptiles  
Prey or Food: Insects, seeds

### DID YOU KNOW?

Because they often coincided with the end of bad weather, some farmers would wait until Lark Buntings came back from their migration to plant crops.



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## Name: Upland Sandpiper

Scientific Name: *Bartramia longicauda*  
Predators: Larger Raptors, large mammals, reptiles  
Prey or Food: Insects

### DID YOU KNOW?

Early settlers used to eat the eggs.



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## Name: Plains Spadefoot Toad

Scientific Name: *Spea bombifrons*  
Predators: Birds, mammals, reptiles  
Prey or Food: Insects, snails, caterpillars, plant matter

### DID YOU KNOW?

These toads are named for the spade-shaped growths on their hind feet that they use to dig the holes that they spend most of their time in.



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## Name: Bullsnake

Scientific Name: *Pituophis catenifer sayi*  
Predators: Raptors, skunks  
Prey or Food: Mammals, birds, bird eggs

### DID YOU KNOW?

Bull snakes hibernate in underground dens - often with other types of snakes such as rattlesnakes and gopher snakes



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## Name: Two-striped Grasshopper

Scientific Name: *Melanoplus bivittus*

Predators: Birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals

Prey or Food: Plants

### DID YOU KNOW?

Grasshoppers have been known to destroy entire crops of cotton, clover, alfalfa and other grains.



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## Name: Blue Grama

Scientific Name: *Bouteloua gracilis*

Predators: Birds, mammals

Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

### DID YOU KNOW?

Blue grama is a type of grass, the fruits of grasses are what we call grain.



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## Name: Prairie Sandreed

Scientific Name: *Calamovilfa longifolia*

Predators: Birds, mammals

Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

### DID YOU KNOW?

This grass begins to grow earlier in the spring than other grasses.



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## Name: Plains Prickly Pear

Scientific Name: *Opuntia polyacantha*

Predators: Birds, mammals including pronghorn and deer, humans

Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

### DID YOU KNOW?

A cactus doesn't have leaves, instead the fleshy pads carry out photosynthesis.



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Name: Prairie Sunflower

Scientific Name: Helianthus petiolaris

Predators: Birds, mammals

Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In early spring, sprouts provide food for caterpillars, as the flower blooms in summer, they are a good food source for pollinators, as the seeds begin to develop in the fall, it feeds birds and mammals.



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Name: Sun

Plants use the sun's energy to grow through a process known as photosynthesis. Because plants are the beginning of all food chains, all plants and animals transfer the sun's energy when they eat.



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