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

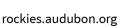
Predators: Raptors, large mammals, reptiles

Prey or Food: Insects

DID YOU KNOW?

This is Wyoming's "State Bird".















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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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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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 densoften 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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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: P<u>rairie Sandreed</u>

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. Project Learning Audubon Tree rockies.audubon.org 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. Audubon Learning Tree ROCKIES.AUDUBON.ORG