



Western Washington Prairies

A prairie is a wonderful place.

There is so much going on in a prairie. We call a place like this an ecosystem. An ecosystem is an area where living creatures such as plants and animals interact with non-living things like soil, water, temperature and air.

A prairie ecosystem is made up of grasses, flowers, birds, mammals, and insects but not many trees.

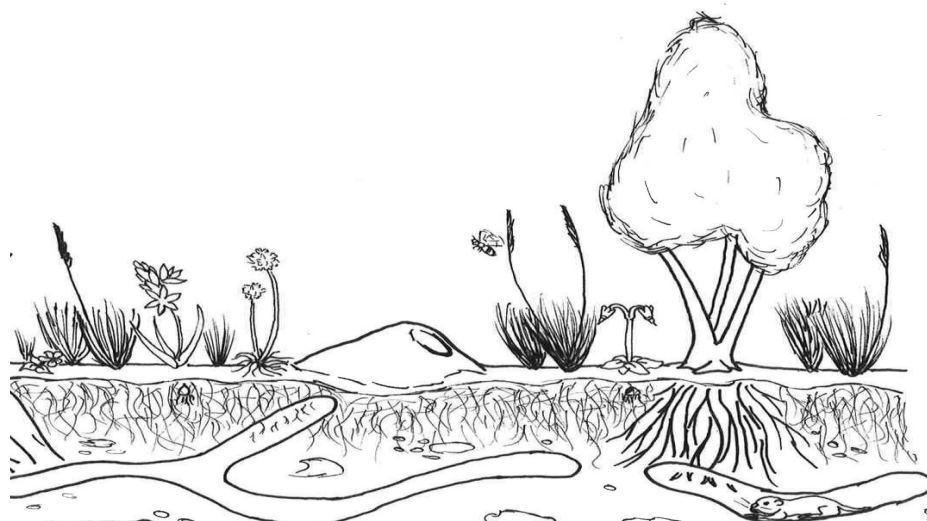


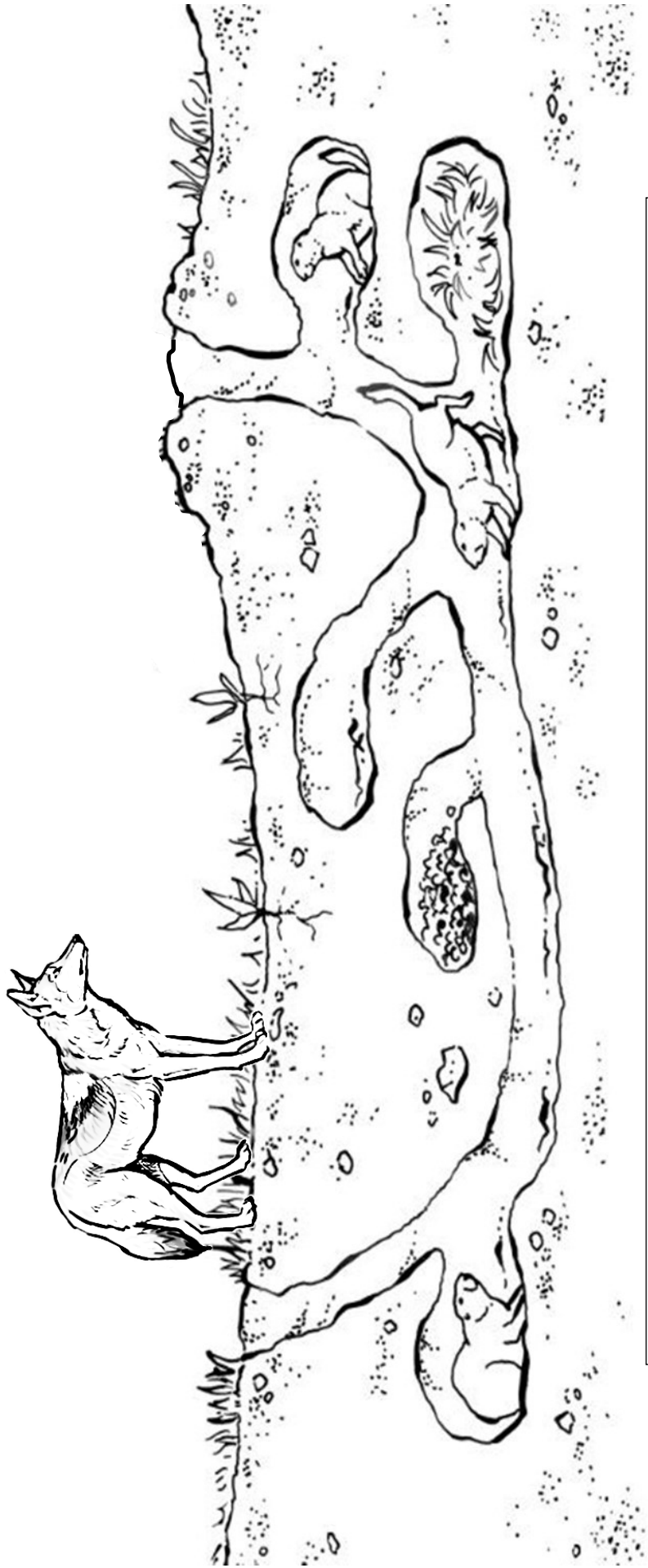
As you learn about what lives in a prairie, you can add to your own prairie on the next page. Draw your own prairie plants and animals. We started the picture with a coyote looking for gophers.

It's your prairie, so you decide what lives on it.

Have fun and don't forget to add yourself on the prairie!

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Burrowing keeps animals safe from predators and weather. We can't see burrows from above, so use your imagination to picture how much is going on below ground in a prairie.

The drawing on this page is a compilation of a prairie by National Geographic and a coyote by Wolf Haven International.





Plants of the Prairie

There are a variety of plants that grow on a prairie - grasses, flowers, and shrubs - but not very many trees! All of these plants play an important role in the health of the prairie ecosystem. They produce many roots that not only help keep soil stable, but also add nutrients to the soil as old roots die and decompose. Prairie plants provide a good habitat and hiding place for a lot of wildlife, and even use the sun's energy to make their own food. Through their flowers, leaves, seeds, and fruit, prairie plants provide an important source of nutrition for pollinators and other wildlife throughout the year, and many have medicinal and other uses for humans too!

Grasses



Roemer's Fescue
(*Festuca roemerii*)



Long-Stolon Sedge
(*Carex inops*)



Poverty Rush
(*Juncus tenuis*)



Small-Flowered Woodrush
(*Luzula campestris*)

Grasses also produce flowers, but they're far less showy than the flowers below. What types of animals do you think like to munch on these plants?

Flowers

Flowers produce nectar, which feeds a variety of pollinators.



Common Yarrow
(*Achillea millefolium*)



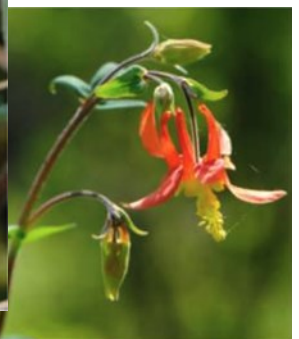
Common Camas
(*Camassia quamash*)



Golden Paintbrush
(*Castilleja levisecta*)



Virginia Strawberry
(*Fragaria virginiana*)



Western Red Columbine
(*Aquilegia formosa*)

A lot of flowers, like the Virginia Strawberry, also produce berries that feed birds and other wildlife. Many of these plants were very important to Native Americans: the Common Camas was a crucial food source, the leaves of Yarrow can be made into a tea, and the Western Columbine has an assortment of medicinal uses.



Can you spot any of the plants from the previous page?



Prairie Word Search:

B S Z S F B G N H P W L V B C
E G J X D E A L A O I P S U F
I C Q B J E W D B L L R B T Q
R P O V Y Y K E I L D E U T S
C M R S M N U J T I L D R E L
A A N A Y Q A G A N I A R R G
M M D Q I S B V T A F T O F Z
A M C B V R T J O T E O W L Z
S A F Z F E I E A O K R P Y T
P L L J U P W E M R I B I R D

Words to find:

BEE
BIRD
BURROW
BUTTERFLY
CAMAS
ECOSYSTEM
HABITAT
MAMMAL
POLLINATOR
PRAIRIE
PREDATOR
WILDLIFE



What is a pollinator?

Pollinators are animals that fertilize plants. This means that they help plants reproduce by moving pollen from plant to plant, which is important for the growth of plants. Pollinators can be bees, beetles, hummingbirds, bats, flies, and butterflies. Of the types of pollinators pictured, circle the type you see most often when you are outside.



Bees

Hummingbirds
Rod Gilbert photo

Beetles

Butterflies

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly
Rod Gilbert photo

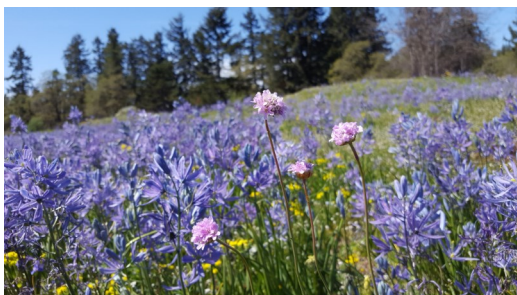
Why are pollinators and prairies important?

Below are facts about pollinators and prairies.

As you read each fact, decide if it tells why pollinators are important, or if it tells why prairies are important.

Write the name (or draw a picture) of either a pollinator or prairie plant next to each statement to show if you think it is about pollinators or prairies.

	Prairies grow food for many of our pollinators and also provide shelter and nesting places.
	Prairie plants need pollinators to create more prairie plants.
	Prairie wildlife like mammals, birds, and reptiles need insects, like many pollinators, as part of their diets.
	Pollinators are responsible for pollinating 75% of our crops: blueberries, apples, most fruits, vegetables, and nuts.
	Even chocolate is pollinated by flies.
	Prairies have different plants that flower and bloom throughout the season which provide food for pollinating insects throughout the year.
	Prairies provide a habitat for some animals that cannot live anywhere else, like the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly.



Did you know...

Bees are one of the most important pollinators in the United States. They pollinate up to 80% of all flowering plants. They like a variety of colors and shapes of flowers because different bees have different tongue lengths and will feed on different shaped flowers.



Animals of the Prairie

Did you know that there are over 50 species of animals that call prairies their home? Just like the plants and pollinators you have learned about, the other insects, reptiles, birds, and mammals that live in the prairies also play an important role in its ecosystem. Here are a few animals you might find on the Wolf Haven prairie or other prairies nearby.

Coyote - Coyotes are great hunters and are considered one of the top predators of



prairies. They prey on small mammals, birds and reptiles but do not have many predators of their own. While they have meat in their diet, they are considered omnivores; they will also eat a variety of vegetation. Coyotes often live alone or in pairs, but they do enjoy howling, just like their larger "cousin", the wolf. Have you heard any singing at night where you live?

Mazama Pocket Gopher - These small rodents are herbivores and eat roots and other vegetation. They live in tunnels and have small, muscular bodies and sharp claws that help them to burrow underground. Their tunnels aerate the soil and bring fresh soil to the surface, making great spots for native prairie plants to grow while also filtering ground water. These gophers are a protected species because their population has been threatened mainly due to habitat loss. While the gophers prefer to stay hidden underground, you might be able to spot small piles of dirt they've pushed out. Have you seen any of their dirt mounds on your nature walks?



Streaked horned lark - One of the many birds of the prairie is small, brown, and yellow. It nests on the ground and prefers open grasslands. During the summer breeding months, the males have horn-shaped feathers on their heads. Adult larks eat grass and seeds but catch insects to feed to their chicks. They are also listed as a threatened species due to habitat loss and rely on prairie conservation efforts to help protect their numbers. If you were a bird, would you make your nest on the ground or in a tree? Why?



Hungry on the Prairie

All living things in an ecosystem have different positions in the food chain. These positions are also called trophic levels. Depending on the structure of the chain, an animal might occupy different levels in different chains. All of the food chains in an ecosystem make up its food web.

Read the definitions below to learn more about the different levels and then complete the activities using the information you've learned on this page and the other pages in this packet.

Trophic Levels

Primary Producers These are living things that make their own food and are also a food for other animals.

Primary Consumers These are animals that eat primary producers and are also prey (food) for other animals.

Secondary Consumers These are animals that eat primary consumers but are also prey animals for other animals.

Tertiary Consumers These are animals that eat other animals but rarely are prey for other animals. They are considered the top of the food chain in their habitat.

Food chain: In each box, draw a picture or write the name of a prairie plant or animal that fits into each category.

Food web: Draw a line from each plant and animal to everything it might eat. Where would you fit in the food web?

Tertiary Consumer
Secondary Consumer
Primary Consumer
Primary Producer





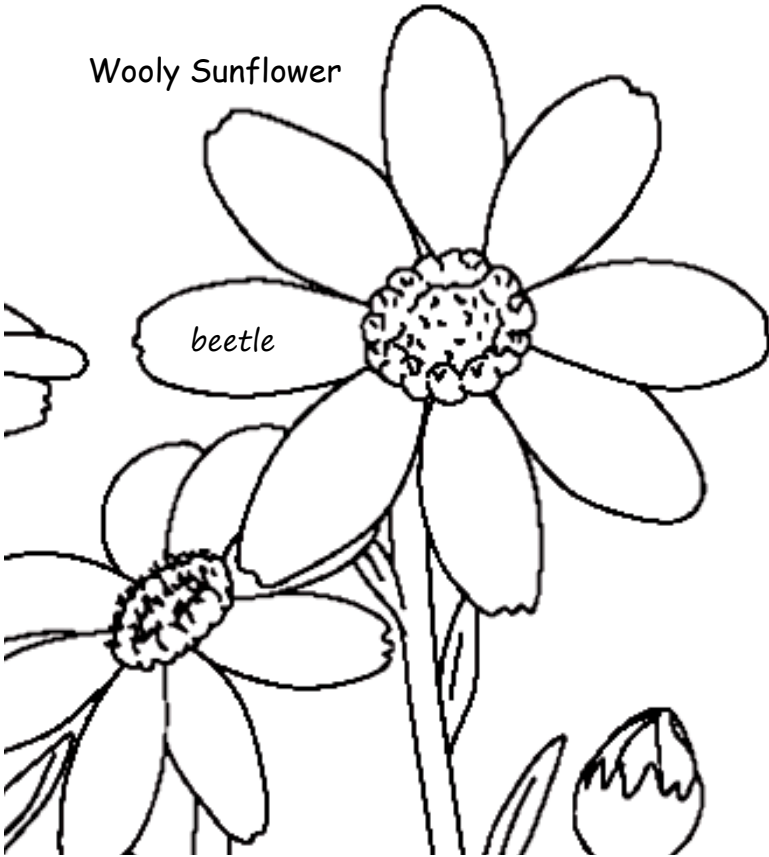
What do you know about prairies?

How is the prairie similar to an area in your neighborhood?

Think about all you learned in this packet about what is in a prairie.

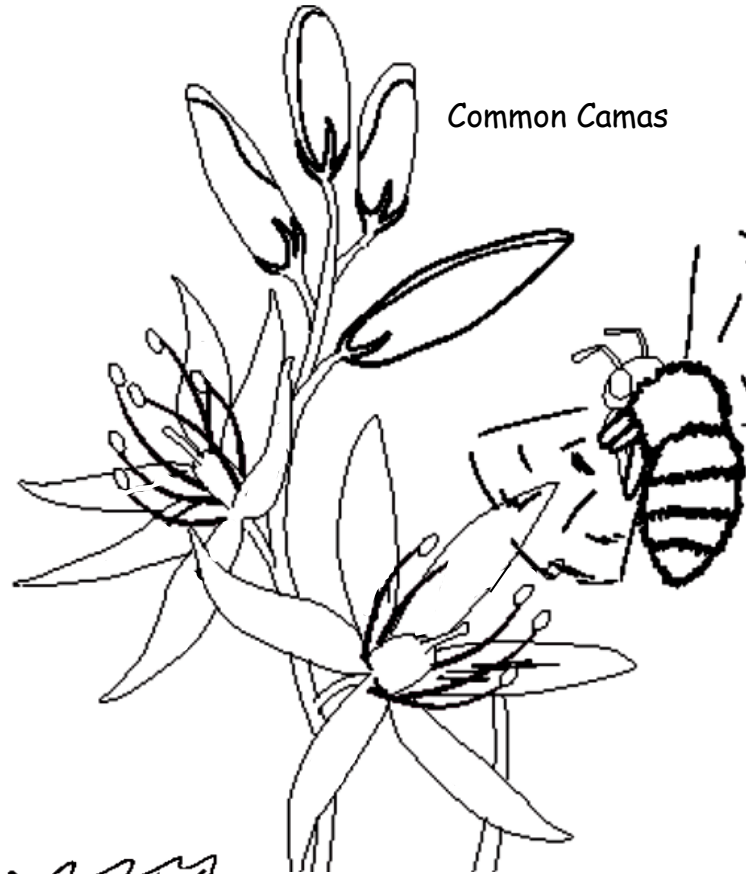
On each petal of the Woolly Sunflower, write the name of something that you learned is on a prairie. How many petals can you fill in? Beetle has been done for you.

Woolly Sunflower

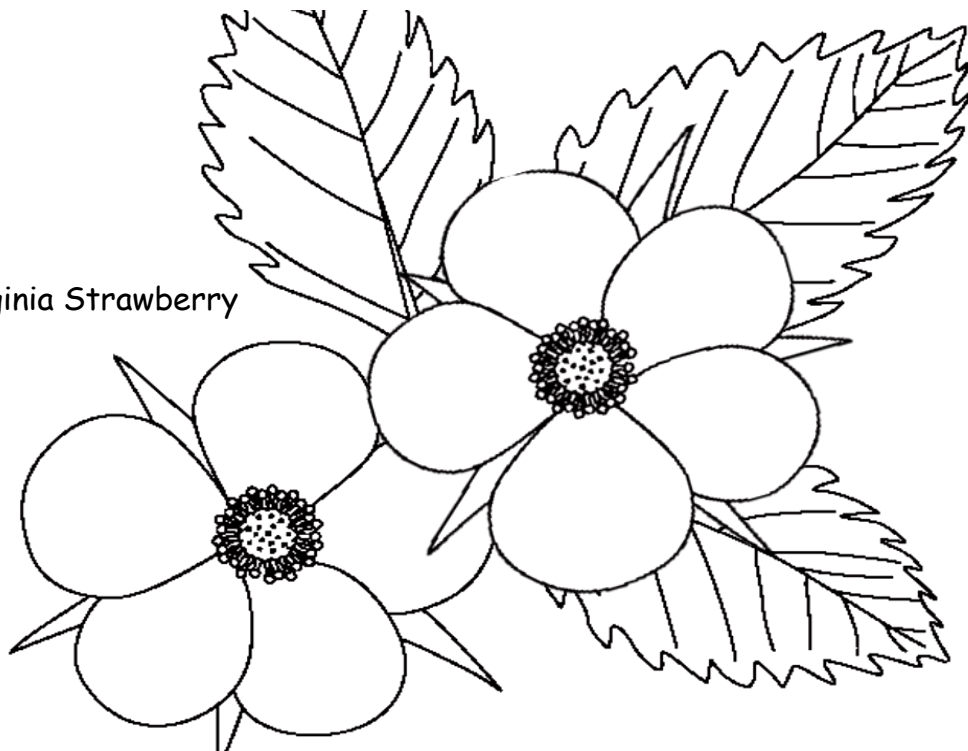


On the parts of the Common Camas, list plants and animals you can see or hear that live in your neighborhood. Can you fill all the parts of the flower? Do you have so many you need to write on the bee as well?

Common Camas



Virginia Strawberry



Take a look back at what you identified as plants and animals in the prairie and your neighborhood. On the petals of the Virginia Strawberry, name all those plants and animals that are in both the prairie and your neighborhood. Can you name enough to fill each petal?