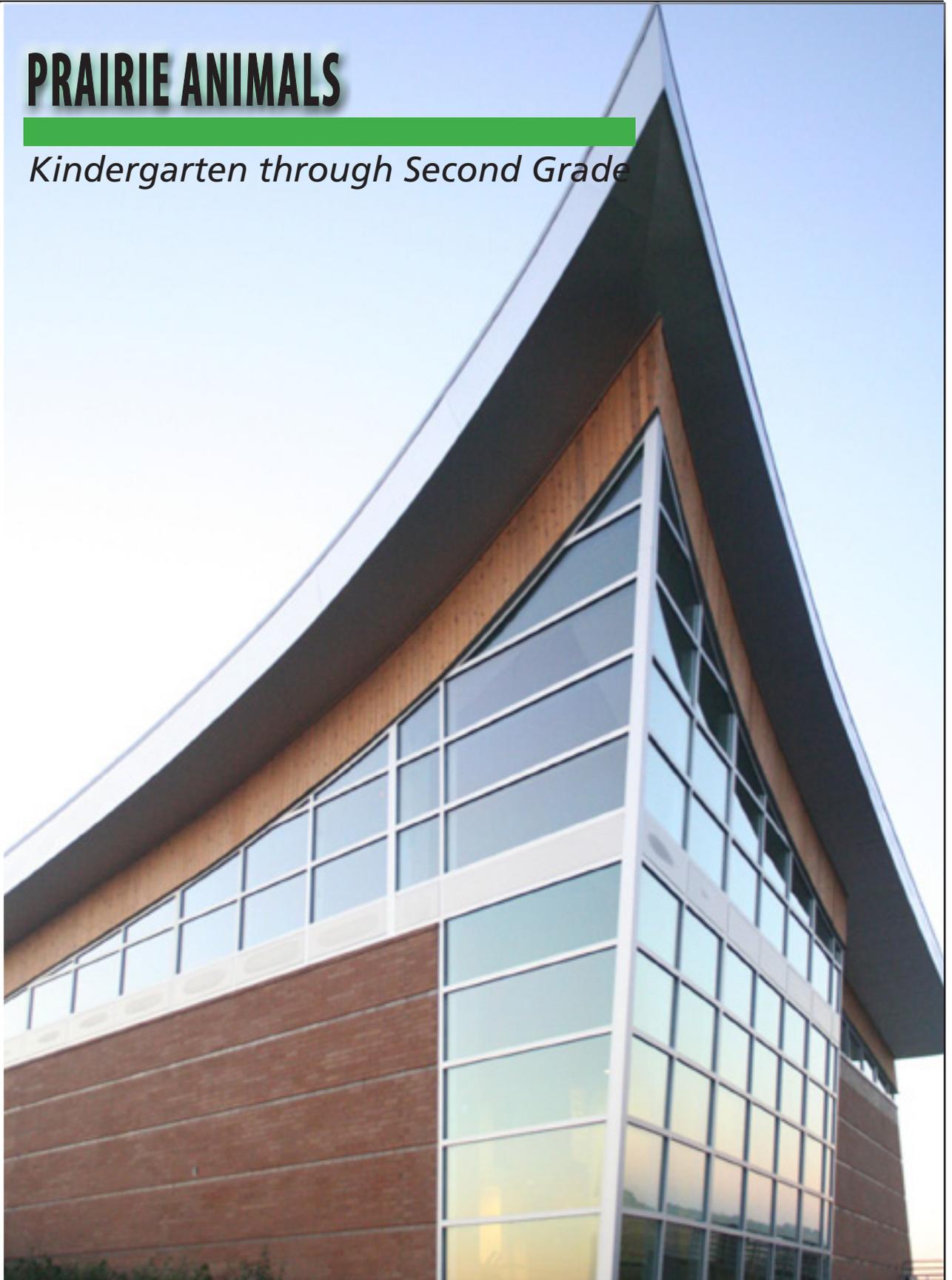


**Free Land was the Cry!**

# PRAIRIE ANIMALS

*Kindergarten through Second Grade*



**Homestead**

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Homestead National Monument  
of America, Nebraska



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*Some of the ideas in this lesson may have been adapted from earlier, unacknowledged sources without our knowledge. If the reader believes this to be the case, please let us know, and appropriate corrections will be made. Thank you.*

# PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



‘What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.’

*Crowfoot quote*

The original animals of the tallgrass prairie were much more varied than can be seen today. The animals and the native plants created an interconnected ecosystem. Because of the loss of many native prairie habitats and overhunting in the 19th century, the biodiversity of animals viewed by the first settlers no longer exists.

It can still be debated whether some of the species we consider to be native to grasslands are recent adapters to the prairie or long time residents. In the forested areas, animals tend to travel alone except in the mating season. Herds of animals are

really a phenomenon of the expansive prairies of the past as is the quick maneuverability and speed of some prairie dwelling animals. On the prairie, we find not only mammals, but a variety of birds, reptiles, and other species which adapted to life on the Great Plains.

Of all the species, the birds tend to be the most diverse and numerous. Here, in the Great Plains, is where the meadowlark, dickcissel, red-tailed hawk, prairie chicken, bobolink, sandhill crane, upland plover, sparrow hawk, swallow-tailed kit, bobwhite quail, great curlew, mourning dove, and many more make their homes. The mammals and reptiles of the prairie are the animals that we commonly associate with the western United States; bison, coyote, antelope, badger, elk, prairie dog, various skunks, otters, foxes, snakes, lizards, among many others. Some have survived and adapted to the changes on the grassland, but many have decreased in number, dependent on the prairie that started to vanish with the tilling of the land.

# CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

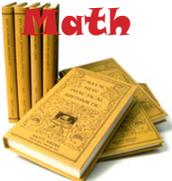
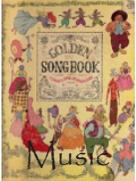
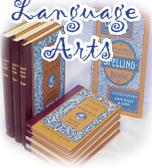
- Students will learn how organisms interact with one another on the tallgrass prairie.
- Students will learn about coyotes.
- Students will learn about prairie animals.

# NATIONAL STANDARDS

## NS.K-4.3 LIFE SCIENCE

As a result of the activities in grades K-4, all students should develop an understanding of

- The characteristics of organisms
- Life cycles of organisms
- Organisms and environments.

<b>SPECIAL ICONS</b>	 Homestead Handout	<b>Science</b> 	<b>Math</b> 	<b>Social Studies</b> 	 Music	 Language Arts
	Indicates a reproducible handout is included	Indicates an additional science activity	Indicates an additional math lesson	Indicates an additional social studies lesson	Indicates an additional music or art activity	Indicates an additional language arts lesson

## Pre-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)



### Facts About Coyotes

Modern coyotes have adapted to their changing environment. They once lived in open prairies and deserts but now inhabit forests and mountains and even modern cities such as Los Angeles. These adaptable animals are omnivores and will eat almost anything. They live in strong family groups. Females give birth to 3 to 12 pups. Both parents feed and protect their young.

## Other Activities

# FOOD WEB OF THE COYOTE

## Purpose

To show how all living things on the prairie interact in order to survive.

## Vocabulary

Discuss these vocabulary words. There is a Coyote Crossword and a Coyote word search in the Additional Resources to reinforce the terms.



carnivore – animal that eats only meat.

coyote – wild member of the dog family that lives on the prairie.

food chain – the series where the smallest organism is a food for a larger one which in turn is a food for a larger one.

habitat – place where animals and plants live together.

herbivore – animal that eats only plants.

omnivore – animal that eats both plants and animals.

prairie – land where mostly grasses grow.

## Discussion

Students may brainstorm about animals that live on the prairie and what they eat. They may think of mammals, birds, and insects.

Introduce or review the terms: herbivore, carnivore, and omnivore.

Introduce the term: food chain. Students could think of themselves at the top of a chain and link the things that they eat.

A crossword puzzle is available to reinforce these concepts in the Additional Resources section.

Animals react to winter weather in one of three ways. They will migrate, hibernate, or adapt. Most prairie animals either hibernate or adapt. What do you do to survive in the winter?

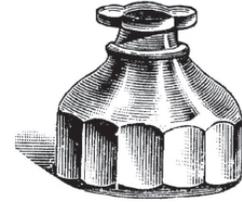


# FOOD WEB OF THE COYOTE

## Pre-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)



### Enrichment Activities



Have students draw themselves as the primary animal on a food chain, adding other plants and animals in order.



See a Food Web of the Coyote Worksheet at the back of this unit.



### Cool Internet Sites:



Watch a mother coyote play with her pups at: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/coyote>

Listen to the coyote a [http://www.desertusa.com/june96/du\\_cycot.html](http://www.desertusa.com/june96/du_cycot.html)

### Language Arts



### Read

*Whose Tracks are These? A Clue Book of Familiar Forest Animals* by Jim Nail.

*The Wild Pups: The True Story of a Coyote Family* by Hope Ryden.

## Other Activities

# RANGER-LED EXPERIENCE

## Coyote Play Date



Coyotes live in strong family groups. Fathers and mothers raise their pups together.

### Prairie Animal Hike Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.

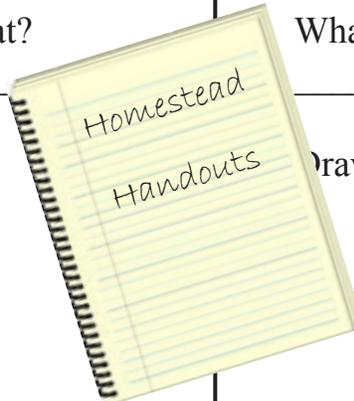
2.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.



**Homestead National Monument of America is proud to be a pioneer in distance learning technology.**

**Contact the Education Coordinator at (402) 223-3514 to schedule your virtual field trip on Prairie Animals.**

# RANGER-LED EXPERIENCE



## Tracking Prairie Animals

- Divide participants into groups of 3 to 5 students with one adult for each group.
- A park ranger will initiate discussion of different animals that live on the prairie. A brief discussion of what a prairie is may be necessary. Younger students can be shown posters of animals for identification and skins could be used. A park ranger will emphasize the paws or hooves of each animal and show a track.
- Groups will walk trails to find and identify 4 footprints. Students will mark the Prairie Animal Hike worksheet with animal, track and what it eats. For younger students one sheet can be used by adult.

Discussion Questions: A park ranger will use posters and animal casts to enhance learning.

1. What is a prairie?

**A prairie is a place where mostly grasses grow. The grasses can be tall or short.**

2. Where do we find a prairie?

**Nebraska is part of a large prairie called the Great Plains.**

3. What animals live on our prairie?

**Many animals share the prairie. Prairie animals: badger, beaver, blackfooted ferret, bobcat, bison/buffalo, cottontail rabbit, coyote, elk, fox, ground squirrel, jackrabbit, kangaroo rat, mountain lion, muskrat, porcupine, prairie dog, pronghorn deer, raccoon, squirrel, vole, white-tailed deer.**

4. What do you see in mud after you step in it?

**You will see a footprint that looks just like your shoe.**

5. You and your brother step in mud. What is different about your footprints?

**They will be different sizes and will be the shape of your individual shoes.**

6. What are ways we know an animal has been on the prairie if we don't see it?

**You might see footprints or tracks; you might hear it; you might see where it ate; you might see scat.**

7. On what kind of ground would you find tracks?

**The ground would be soft or muddy.**

8. How might different animal tracks look different?

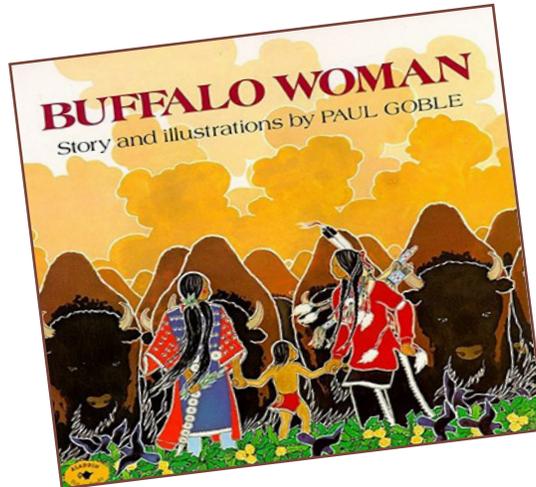
**Each animal will leave a track that looks like its paw or hoof.**

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)



Paul Goble was born in 1933 in England. Always interested in American Indians, he moved to the U.S. in 1977 and became a citizen in 1984. He lived in Lincoln, NE before moving to Rapid City, SD in 1989. He has written and illustrated more than 30 children's books that retell traditional American Indian stories. He has won numerous honors including the Caldecott Medal in 1978 for *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*.

# BUFFALO WOMAN



## Materials

*Buffalo Woman* by Paul Goble  
Other Paul Goble books or American Indian books  
Grocery bag with common food items

## Activity

Display and discuss the food items from the bag.

- What do you like to eat?
- How do you prepare it?
- Where do you go to get food?
- Where did the American Indians, from the prairie, get their food?

Read the book *Buffalo Woman* aloud.

- How did the buffalo help the American Indians?
- How did the American Indians help the buffalo?

## Other Activities

To extend the activity students could spend time looking through other books and discuss what they have learned about the buffalo and how the American Indians hunted them and used them in their daily life.

## Social Studies



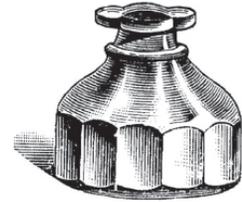
# PAUL GOBLE

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

### More Books by Paul Goble



### Enrichment Activities

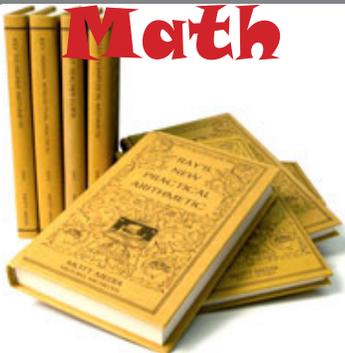


Look at the bookcovers of Paul Goble and talk about what makes them special.

Have students design a bookcover for their favorite prairie animal book.

1. Look at the covers of books you love.
2. Decide what important picture you want on the cover.
3. Make it colorful. Use fun lettering.
4. Write the title and author. Remember to include yourself as the illustrator.

## Math



Historians estimate that anywhere from 25 million to 70 million buffalo roamed the plains. Choose a number and discuss place value.

## Other Activities

# CHARACTER EDUCATION

---

## Respect

Respectful students treat people and possessions with consideration. They tolerate other's beliefs and accept individual differences. They do not treat people or possessions with violence, meanness or rudeness. They treat others the way they want to be treated.

### 5 Minute Focus

Ask students to name some animals that live on the prairie. Focus on one animal for the discussion questions. A picture of a raccoon has been provided.

- Where do they live?
- What do they eat?
- Where do they get their food?
- What happens if they can't find their food?
- What happens if they can't find a place to live?
- Who takes care of them?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### Recommended Reading

*Mystic Horse* by Paul Goble; HarperCollins, 2003

*The Gift of the Sacred Dog* by Paul Goble; Bradbury Press, 1980

*The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* by Paul Goble; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989

*The Great Race of the Birds and Animals* by Paul Goble; Bradbury Press, 1985

*The Legend of the White Buffalo Woman* by Paul Goble; National Geographic Children's Books, 1998

*The Wild Pups: The True Story of a Coyote Family* by Hope Ryden; Putnam, 1975.

*Whose Tracks are These? A Clue Book of Familiar Forest Animals* by Jim Nail; Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994.



# Prairie Animal Hike Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

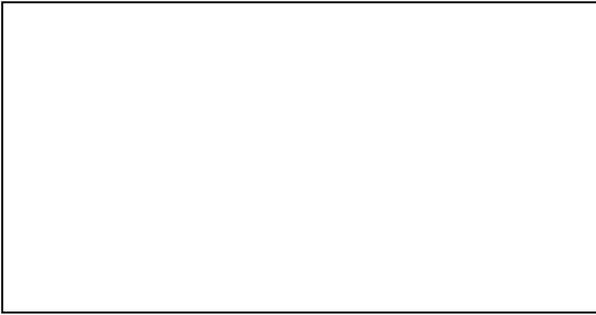
1.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.



2.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.



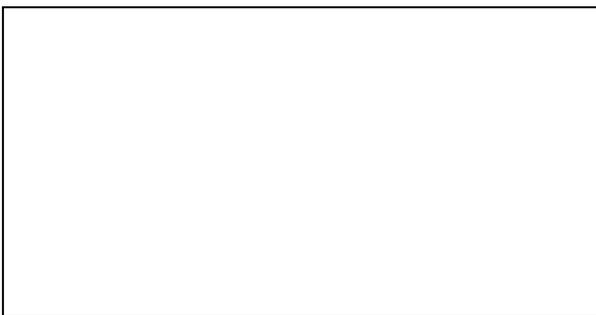
3.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

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Draw the track in the box.



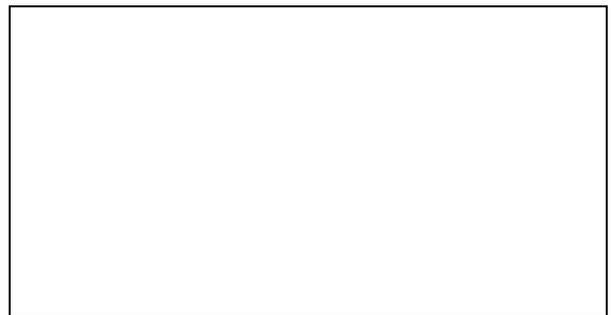
4.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

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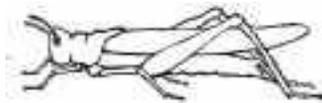
\_\_\_\_\_

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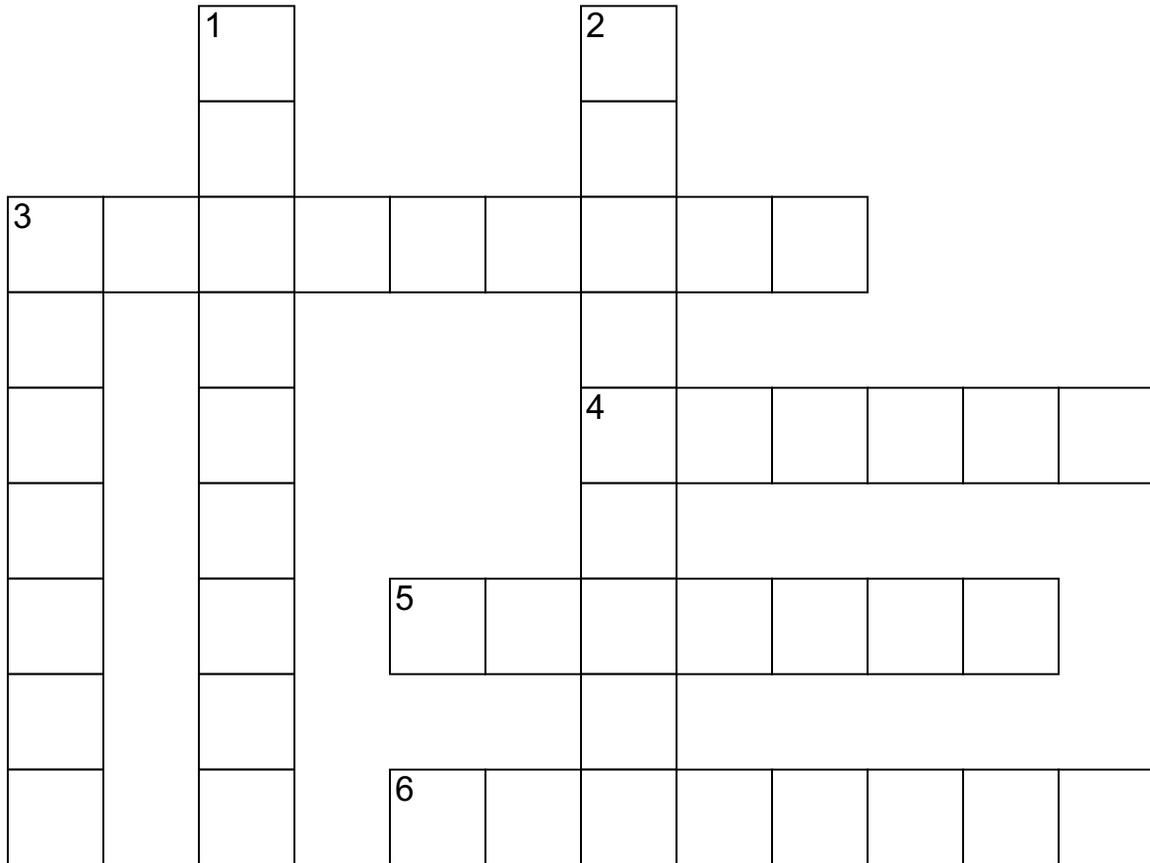
# Food Web of the Coyote

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Coyote Crossword



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## ACROSS

- 3 animal that eats only plants
- 4 wild member of the dog family that lives on the prairie
- 5 land where mostly grasses grow
- 6 animal that eats both plants and animals

## DOWN

- 1 animal that eats only meat
- 2 the series where the smallest organism is a food for a larger one which in turn is a food for a larger one
- 3 place where animals and plants live together



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Coyote Word Search

Find the words in the grid.  
Words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all eight directions.

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

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carnivore

coyote

food chain

habitat

herbivore

omnivore

prairie

# Discussion Questions from Ranger-Led Experience

Ranger will use posters and animal casts to enhance learning.

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