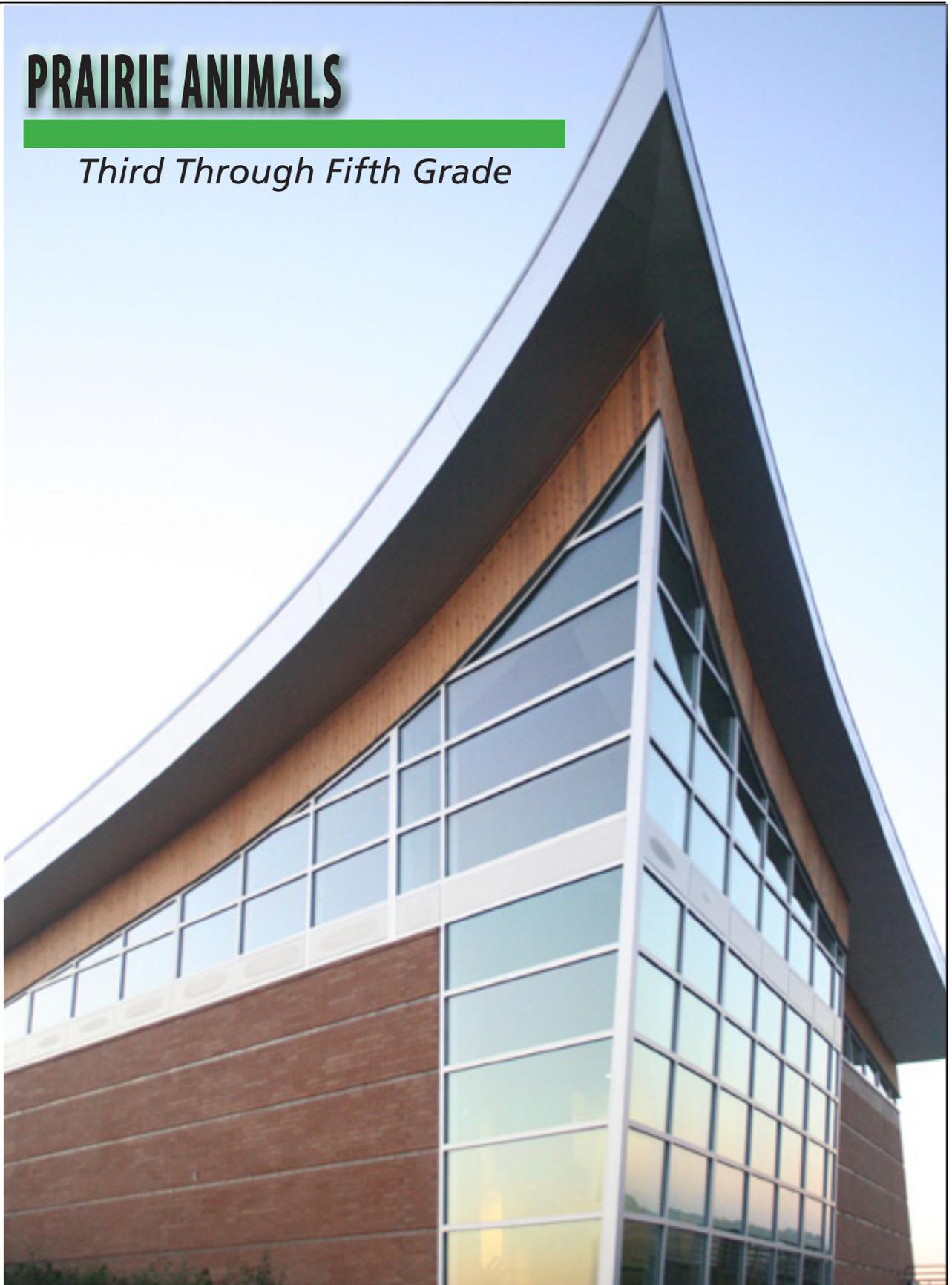


**Free Land was the Cry!**

# PRAIRIE ANIMALS

*Third Through Fifth Grade*



**Homestead**

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Homestead National Monument  
of America, Nebraska



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This unit has Pre-Visit Activities for teachers to use to prepare students for a visit to Homestead National Monument of America, a Ranger-Led Experience which will occur during your visit, and Post-Visit Activities for teachers to use to expand students' knowledge of the impact the Homestead Act of 1862 had on America.

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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

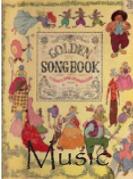
As a result of activities in grades K-4, all students should develop understanding of

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

## NS.5-8.3 LIFE SCIENCE

As a result of their activities in grades 5-8, all students should develop understanding of

- Structure and function in living systems
- Reproduction and heredity
- Regulation and behavior
- Populations and ecosystems
- Diversity and adaptations of organisms.

<b>SPECIAL ICONS</b>						
	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)

*Did you know?*



When Europeans first saw the prairie they called it “The Great American Desert.” By the mid 1800’s, however, they realized that it was fertile ground suitable for farming. Through treaties with American Indian tribes, many of which were not honored, land was taken and given to white settlers and homesteaders.

# PRAIRIE ANIMAL RESEARCH



## Procedure

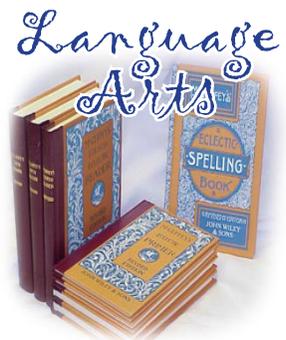
Students will brainstorm about prairie animals, focusing on mammals. See the list on page 7. This list should not include insects or birds. An animal will be selected for each student. Each student will find facts and fill out the provided Prairie Animal Project worksheet. Students will use classroom research procedures.

## Vocabulary

diurnal – awake and active during the day.  
nocturnal – awake and active during the night.  
prairie – a grasslands ecosystem, with flat or hilly land.

## Other Activities

Have students compose and illustrate an acrostic poem using their animal name and its characteristics.



# PRAIRIE ANIMAL RESEARCH



## Pre-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

See full-size worksheet at the end of the unit.

### Prairie Animal Project

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The prairie animal I am reporting on is the: \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Characteristics:**

Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Size as an adult: Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

Weight as an adult: Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

Other features: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Nocturnal or diurnal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Predators:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Food:** check one  
herbivore \_\_\_\_\_ carnivore \_\_\_\_\_ omnivore \_\_\_\_\_

Specific foods: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How it gets its food: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reproduction:**

Size of baby: \_\_\_\_\_

What baby eats: \_\_\_\_\_

Special name for baby: \_\_\_\_\_

Age it leaves parent: \_\_\_\_\_

### Prairie animals

- badger
- beaver
- black-footed ferret
- bobcat
- 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

# RANGER-LED EXPERIENCE



- Ranger will initiate a discussion about prairie animals using their hides and skulls. Emphasis will be placed on the paws and hooves and what tracks each might leave.
- Divide students into groups of 4 to 5 with an adult leader in each group.
- Groups will be given a Prairie Animal Hike worksheet and will walk the prairie to identify as many tracks as they can. They will make a rubbing or drawing of each.
- After the groups return from their walk discuss the following:
  - What tracks did you find?
  - What tracks did you see that you already knew?
  - What tracks did you see that were new to you?
  - What did you see that surprised you?

# RANGER-LED EXPERIENCE



See full-size worksheet at the end of the unit.

## Prairie Animal Hike Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

<p>1. What animal made this track? _____</p> <p>What does this animal eat? _____</p> <p>Draw the track in the box.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>	<p>2. What animal made this track? _____</p> <p>What does this animal eat? _____</p> <p>Draw the track in the box.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>3. What animal made this track? _____</p> <p>What does this animal eat? _____</p> <p>Draw the track in the box.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>	<p>4. What animal made this track? _____</p> <p>What does this animal eat? _____</p> <p>Draw the track in the box.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

# ANIMAL FOLKTALE

*Did you know?*

Paul Goble was born in 1933 in England.

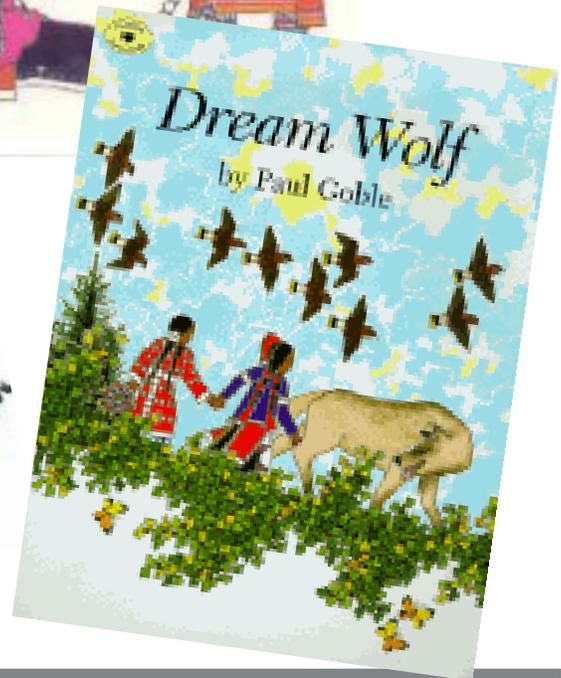
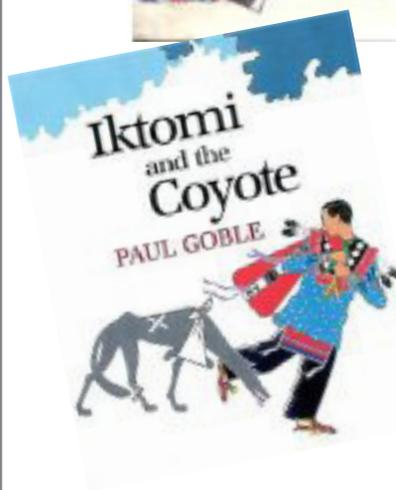
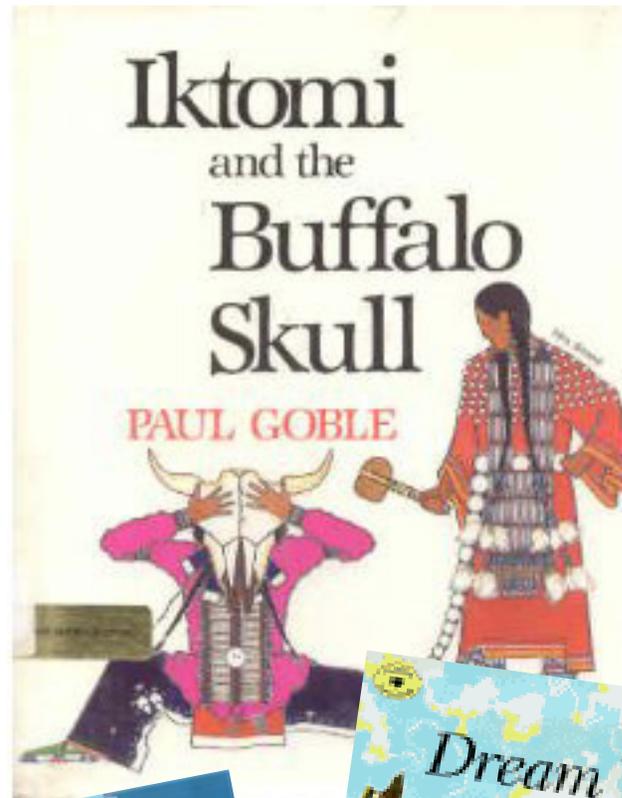
Always interested in American Indian people, he moved to the U.S. in

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*.



## Other Activities

Have students read and do a report on a book by Paul Goble. Several books are listed in the Additional Resources section. Have students make a library cover for it.



# ANIMAL FOLKTALE

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

Read, or have available for students to read, books by Paul Goble that have prairie animals as characters.

Have students create a folktale with a prairie animal as the main character. Students should use personification and try to use similes.

Elements of a folktale:

- Are usually about ordinary people and everyday life.
- Include setting, characters and a problem to solve.
- Have characters represent a trait such as honesty or cleverness.
- Intentionally exaggerate to teach a lesson.

### Prewriting:

For your prewriting notes, list some unusual animals and choose one of them. Think about how the animal will show its special qualities. List some similes you might use. Then, list the events of your tale.

### Drafting:

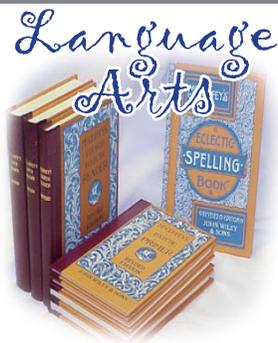
In drafting the tale, follow the list of events that you compiled in your prewriting notes. Write at least a paragraph (or more) for each event.

### Revising:

Share your folktale with a partner. Check for clarity and completeness of events and descriptions. Have your partner read your folktale to you.

### Publishing:

Type your finished story on the computer, print it, and add your own illustrations.



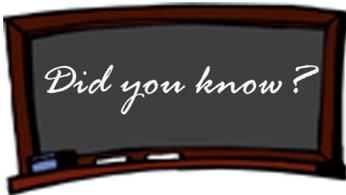
## Definitions

Personification - Giving an animal human qualities.

Simile - A figure of speech that shows a resemblance or similarity between two unlikely things. A simile usually uses "like" or "as."

## Other Activities

## Post-Visit Activity #2 (suggested)



Euro-American settlers wrote of seeing too many to count. Many killed the bison for sport; however, most were killed to supply northeastern industrial efforts. Hides made excellent strapping material and conveyor belts, essential to new and expanding factories. While the furs and hides were sent back east the carcass was left on the prairie to rot. With more settlers, expanding railroads, and increased industrialism, the bison nearly vanished. By 1889 there were only eight-five free-roaming bison left.

## BISON FACTS



### Bison Facts

- Bison, often referred to as buffalo, are the heaviest land animals in North America.
- Bison are herbivores.
- Bison can be up to 6.5 feet tall at the shoulder and can weigh over a ton.
- Bison can run at speeds up to 40 miles per hour.
- Bison horns can grow up to 2 feet long.
- Today, about 500,000 bison live on preserves and ranches.

# CHARACTER EDUCATION

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## 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

Share the following incident. A thirteen year old boy, preparing to head out on the Oregon Trail, made leather boots to protect the feet of his dog during the journey. Discuss the following questions.

- How does this show respect?
- Why should we respect wild animals?
- How can we show respect for animals, pets or wild animals?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### Reading List

*Buffalo Hunt* by Russell Freedman; Holiday House, 1988

*Buffalo Woman* by Paul Goble; Aladdin, 1987

*Dream Wolf* by Paul Goble; Aladdin, 1997

*Iktomi and the Buffalo Skull* by Paul Goble; Scholastic, 1996

*Iktomi and the Coyote* by Paul Goble; Scholastic, 1998

*Mystic Horse* by Paul Goble; HarperCollins, 2003

*Prairies* by Melissa Cole; Blackbirch Press/Thomson Gale, 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 Prairie Builders: Reconstructing America's Lost Grasslands* by Sneed B. Collard III; Houghton Mifflin, 2005

*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.

### Recommended Websites

Watch a mother coyote play with her pups at: <http://bit.ly/90QJss>

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

Find out more about buffalo at: <http://bit.ly/byEpNb>

# Prairie Animal Project

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The prairie animal I am reporting on is the: \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Characteristics:**

Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Size as an adult: Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

Weight as an adult: Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

Other features: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Nocturnal or diurnal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Predators:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Food:** check one

herbivore \_\_\_\_\_

carnivore \_\_\_\_\_

omnivore \_\_\_\_\_

Specific foods: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How it gets its food: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reproduction:**

Size of baby: \_\_\_\_\_

What baby eats: \_\_\_\_\_

Special name for baby: \_\_\_\_\_

Age it leaves parent: \_\_\_\_\_

# Prairie Animal Hike Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

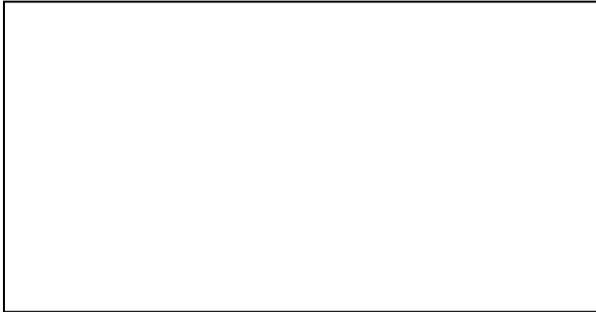
1.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.



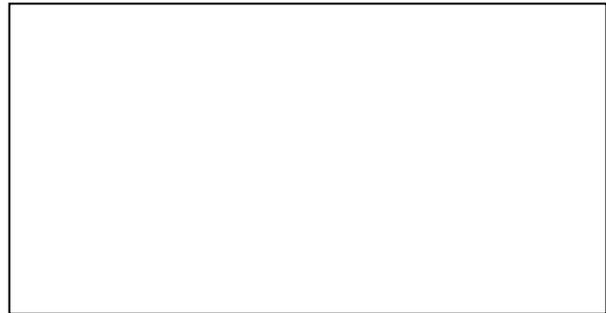
2.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.



3.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.



4.  
What animal made this track?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does this animal eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw the track in the box.

