

Issue 29, 2020 **Founded by Betty Debnam**

Next Week: Bison

Meet the **Prairie**



Mini Fact:

Prairie dogs are hunted by foxes, eagles, redtailed hawks, badgers and coyotes.

If you're on a driving vacation this summer, keep an eye out for little animals popping up and down in the prairies beyond the highway.

Prairie dogs are great fun to watch. They busily dart from place to place, playing, working to build mounds, grooming one another, sending signals, and even seeming to kiss and snuggle.

What's a prairie dog?

A prairie dog is not a dog at all, but a rodent. A rodent is a mammal with teeth that keep growing as long as it lives. Other members of the rodent family include squirrels, chipmunks and mice.

The most common prairie dog, the blacktailed, is found on the North American prairies. Another type, the white-tailed, lives higher up in mountainous areas. They grow to be between 12 and 16 inches long.

Prairie dogs eat mostly grasses. They sometimes add sagebrush and other prairie plants and insects to their diet.

Prairie dog sounds

Early settlers called them dogs because their calls sound like high-pitched dog barks. Experts say different barks and body movements send different signals. For example, one bark might warn of a hawk, while a different one might warn of a snake.

Another bark might signal a person approaching with a weapon, while yet another bark might signal that the person is unarmed.



Prairie dog towns

Prairie dogs live in big underground colonies, or towns. Each family group has its own area, with separate rooms for the bathroom, food storage, sleeping and nurseries.

Texas once had the largest prairie dog town on record. It covered about 25,000 square miles and was home to about 400 million prairie dogs!

Prairie dog mounds

The mounds they build outside their tunnel entrances serve as lookout towers, where sentries can stand to watch for danger.

In order to have a clear view if an enemy approaches, prairie dogs bite off the grass around their mounds.

The mounds also keep water from flooding the tunnels below.

If a sentry spots danger, it gives a

danger call and then scampers below and listens. If it hears nothing, it peeks its head out for a double-check.



they're there.

Resources

Keystone species

animals might become

threatened or disappear.

are about 140 species of

wildlife that eat prairie dogs or use their towns. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

doesn't consider the

little rodents.

black-tailed prairie dog

Experts believe there

The prairie dog is considered a keystone

species upon which other animals depend.

This means that if it were to die out, other

to be endangered. In fact, in the United

States, there are about 24 million of the

Prairie dogs do have sharp claws and

teeth, but they are not good fighters. Their

only real defense is to run away. They can

To make their underground towns

cover up so nothing can come in. However,

They don't build mounds near these

the prairie dog can open them quickly to

escape hatches, so enemies don't know

run up to 35 mph for short distances.

safer, they dig escape tunnels that they

Prairie dog defenses

On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPprairiedog
- wwf.to/2YsAbNs

At the library:

- "Prairie Dog Song: The Key to Saving North America's Grasslands" by Susan
- "The Prairie Dog's Town: A Perfect Hideaway" by Miriam Aronin



Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of prairie dogs are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BARK, CLAWS, COLONY, DEFENSE, DOG, GRASS, KEYSTONE, MAMMAL MOUND, PRAIRIE, RODENT, SETTLERS, SIGNAL, SPECIES. TEETH, TOWN, TUNNEL, UNDERGROUND, WARN.

J T K S F L K W A R N Q M F ACOSGSEIXJSAWP BOBWHIYNKRMSEH LHDNGSANMOCAX GTNT OZAOHY Ε DRLN Ζ C S ATUNDERGROUN MOUNDROPPRAI DE F ENSETTLERS

Cook's Corner

Seaside Stroganoff

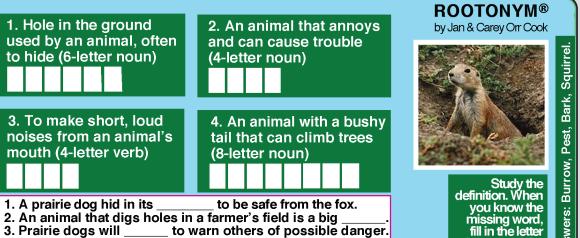
- You'll need: • 1/4 cup butter
- 1/3 cup mushrooms, sliced
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 1 (10.5-ounce) can cream of mushroom soup
- 2 (6.5-ounce) cans tuna fish, drained
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 cups egg noodles, cooked



What to do:

- 1. Cook mushroom and onion pieces in butter in a skillet over medium heat for 10 minutes or until onion pieces are soft. Stir often.
- 2. Add soup, tuna and sour cream, mixing well after each ingredient.
- 3. Lower heat and cook 5 minutes or until warm.
- 4. Serve over cooked noodles. Serves 4.

You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.



Mini Jokes

Paul: What goes 80 mph underground?

Pat: A prairie dog riding a motorcycle!

French researchers say Belgian Malinois shepherd dogs can sniff out humans exposed to the COVID-19 coronavirus from the distinct odor in armpits resulting from the infection. For the test, researchers used dogs trained in search and rescue, to find explosives, or to sniff out colon cancer in humans. Scientists from the National Veterinary School of Alfort say that four of the dogs had a 100% success rate in detecting the virus among 360 human subjects.

For later:

Look in your newspaper for stories about wildlife that live in your area.

Teachers: Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!





4. Sue saw a prairie dog and said, "It looks like a 2020 Cassius One LLC --- www.myvocabulary.com

mouth (4-letter verb)

3. Prairie dogs will