

Prairies

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Prairies Latest News

Recent efforts—including a newly launched database—aim to ensure that the prairies are restored much more comprehensively.

About Prairies

- Prairies are **flat, temperate grasslands** found in **North America**.
- Most North American prairies are in locations with a **low amount of annual rainfall**.
- Prairie **vegetation is maintained by grazing, fire, drought, and low temperatures**.
- Although **grasses dominate, lichens, mosses, forbs, and low- to mid-size shrubs also** comprise prairie vegetation.
- **Taller shrubs and trees, mostly willows and poplars**, including aspen and cottonwoods, are **found in depressions and valleys** where there is sufficient moisture and nutrients.

- Prairie, like other temperate grasslands, is **among the most productive and diverse of earth's terrestrial ecosystems.**
- **Grasses**, the predominant cover in prairie vegetation, have the **following adaptations:**
- **Deep** or extensive **roots.**
- Growing points at or near the soil surface that are tucked in the crown of the plant.
- **Narrow leaves.**
- **Small flowers in dense heads** that are **pollinated by wind.**
- **Tough stems and leaves** hardened with silica phytoliths (plant stones).
- Strategies to **optimize photosynthesis without losing moisture.**
- **Wildlife species** living in prairies have **adapted to a semi-arid, windy, open environment.**
- Species found here include **elk, deer, coyote, bobcat, Badgers,** jackrabbits, ground squirrels, pocket gophers, etc
- **Similar temperate grasslands in South America** are called **Pampas**, while in **Africa they** are described as **velds** and in **Asia** are known as **steppes.**

Source: **PHY**

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