

DICKINSON COUNTY NATURE CENTER

GRADE K — “IN THE TALL TALL GRASS”

Core expectations

K-LS1-1 Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

K-ESS2-2 Construct an argument supported by evidence for how plants and animals (including humans) can change the environment to meet their needs.

K-ESS3-1 Use the model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants and animals (including humans) and the places they live.

Activity Time

One 30- to 45-minute session

Contact

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Program Alignment with Iowa Core Curriculum

Disciplinary Core Ideas

- **LS1:A Structure and Function:** All organisms have external parts. Different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find and take in food, water and air. Plants also have different parts — roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruit — that help them survive and grow.
- **LS1.C Organization for Matter and Energy Flow in Organisms:** All animals need food in order to live and grow. They obtain their food from plants or from other animals. Plants need water and light to live and grow.
- **LS1.D: Information Processing:** Animals have body parts that capture and convey different kinds of information needed for growth and survival. Animals respond to these inputs with behaviors that help them survive. Plants also respond to some external inputs.
- **LS4D: Biodiversity and Humans:** There are many different kinds of living things in any area, and they exist in different places on land and in water.
- **ESS2.E: Biogeology:** Plants and animals can change their environment.

Investigative questions

- What kind animals do you think live in Iowa prairies?
- How many animals do you think live in Iowa prairies?
- What is an adaptation?
- What kinds of adaptations do plants and animals need to live in a prairie?

Investigative phenomena

With the book “In the Tall Tall Grass” and a prairie felt board, students will be able to explore the adaptations of plants and animals that live in the prairie.

Practices (SEPs)

- Students and a naturalist will carry out an investigation of what animals live in Iowa’s prairies.
- Students will make observations to provide information about what animals live in our prairies.
- Students will analyze and interpret data using observations; students will be able to describe the plants and animals that live in our native prairie landscape.

Cross Cutting Concepts students will identify:

- Structure and function of our native prairie ecosystem.
- Structure and function of animals adapted to live in a prairie ecosystem.
- Patterns of adaptations among animals adapted to live in similar habitat types, plus, systems and system models of animals/plants in habitats.



CONSERVATION BOARD

DICKINSON COUNTY NATURE CENTER

GRADE K — “IN THE TALL TALL GRASS”

SIDE 2

Supplies

All supplies brought by the nature center unless otherwise arranged.

- Prairie Felt Board
- Prairie Plants and Animals
- *In the Tall Tall Grass* by Denise Fleming
- Magnet Clips

Animal Ambassadors

- Teddy: Ornate box turtle
- Al: Toad
- Itsy Bitsy: Western fox snake

Program Overview

Background

Our native prairie landscape is full of diverse beauty. The landscape of Iowa has undergone drastic changes in the last 150 years. Prairies once covered 30 million acres of Iowa; now only about 10,000 acres remain. Although prairies have declined drastically during the last 100 years, many communities have been working to restore prairies and native landscapes.

These beautiful landscapes are more than just grasses. They offer home to many flowering plants and forbs. Prairies are home to more than 300 different species of native grasses and flowers. These grasses and flowers are pollinated by insects and birds, and strong winds help to spread the seeds. Some of the more common prairie plants include compass plant, blazing star, prairie coneflower, big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indian grass.

Prairies produce ample amounts of food and provide shelter for a number of wildlife species. Mammals include pocket gophers, ground squirrels and white-tail deer. Birds such as red-winged blackbirds, dickcissels, meadowlarks, bobolinks and sparrows call our prairies home. An array of reptiles and amphibians like skinks, garter and hognose snakes, leopard frogs and American toads also live in the prairie.

Procedure

- 1) The naturalist will begin the discussion of how Iowa once was covered in millions of acres of prairie.
- 2) After the discussion, we will start reading the book “In the Tall Tall Grass.” While reading the book, students will be asked to bring their animals to the felt board as we discuss them in the story.
- 3) Once the story is completed and all the animals have found a place on the felt board, the naturalist will discuss the diversity of animals and adaptations of some key animals that reside in the prairie.
- 4) Following the story, the naturalist will bring out some of our special animal ambassadors and talk about how they are adapted to living in the prairie. Students will be able to observe and touch two or three living prairie friends.