



Prairie Magic Try-It Brownie Try-It

Girl Scouts of Wisconsin - Badgerland Council



Do 4 activities to complete the Brownie Girl Scout Try-It

What makes a prairie special?

Prairies are different from forests. What makes a prairie different? What kinds of plants live in a prairie? What kinds of plants **Do Not** live in prairies?

A Peek at a Prairie

Visit a prairie. Look at the prairie. A single prairie can have more than 100 different kinds of flowers and grasses! Take a closer look at the prairie plants. Count how many different kinds you can find.

Prairie "Critters"

What kinds of animals might live in a prairie? Where would insects live? Where would birds, mammals and reptiles live? What would they eat? Draw lines to match each group of animals to its prairie home and food source.

Insects	nests on the ground, hidden in the grasses	eat flowers, leaves and small animals
Birds	digs holes in the ground	eat insects or leaves
Reptiles & Small mammals	lay down in grass	eat leaves or drink nectar from flowers
Mammals	Under leaves or flowers	eat seeds from prairie plants

Draw or cut pictures of prairie animals out of magazines and make a collage.

Prairie Restaurant

Plants use the sun's energy to grow. Some animals eat the plants. Some animals eat other animals. A "prairie restaurant" food chain shows how energy is passed from plants to animals. Create a "prairie restaurant" using plants and animals that live in the prairie. Draw a food chain or play a food chain game from the "Prairie Magic Try-It Booklet."

Help a Prairie Grow

Help the prairie plants and critters by collecting or planting prairie seeds. Call Girl Scouts of Wisconsin - Badgerland Council Property Director, Christine Posey at 800.236.1162, to see what your Girl Scout Troop can do to help the prairies on Badgerland Council Property. City, county, or state parks might be able to use your help too!

Prairie "Pictures"

Create an art or craft project about a prairie. Draw or paint a picture of a prairie. Or use prairie plants to create a design. Prairie grasses can be braided into a bracelet or necklace. Or weave a basket or wall hanging using the plants. **Be sure to get permission from the prairie owner before picking any plants.

Helping Prairie Wildlife

Help the animals that live in the prairie. Build or put up an animal shelter such as a butterfly box, bluebird box or other bird house. Plant plants to help attract certain animals. You might even try growing the plants yourself.

To order badges and patches from Badgerland Council Contact the Madison Girl Scout Center Trefoil Shop at 608.237.1173.

Girl Scouts of Wisconsin - Badgerland Council Prairie Magic Try-It Booklet

Information and activities to help Brownie Girl Scout troops
earn their Prairie Magic Try-It

The following information and activities are designed to give troop leaders and other adults the information they need to help the girls complete the requirements for Badgerland Council's Girl Scout Brownie Prairie Magic Try-It. Each section corresponds to the Try-It requirement.

To visit a prairie or help with seed collecting and other service projects, contact the following organizations or call your local DNR for locations near you!

Girl Scouts of Wisconsin - Badgerland Council has prairies at Camp Stetler in Richland Center (Richland) and Echo Valley Farm near Mt. Horeb (Dane.)

Dane County Parks has prairie locations all over Dane County. Contact Wayne Pauly at 608-2243603

U.S. Fish and Wildlife has prairies in Iowa County. Contact Kurt Waterstradt at 608-221-1206 ext. 16 or kurt_waterstradt@fws.gov

Governor Nelson State Park is located in Waunakee. Contact the Park Superintendent at 608-831-3005.

City of Middleton Parks Department has many prairies. Contact Penni Klein, Public Lands Manager at 608-827-1044.

The Nature Conservancy has land all over our council, especially in the Baraboo area. Contact Katie King for the prairie closest to you. 608-251-8140.

The Ice Age Trail has prairie locations in several parts of Black Hawk Council. Contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 for specific locations.

The UW-Madison Arboretum is located in Madison. Call 608-263-7888 for more information or to set up a visit.

What Makes a Prairie Special

*Prairies are different from forests. What makes a prairie different? What kinds of plants live in a prairie? What kinds of plants **Do Not** live in prairies?*

The easiest way to complete this is to visit a forest and a prairie ecosystem. Preferably, find a prairie that is on the edge of a forest so the girls can see both at one time. This is actually quite common in southern Wisconsin so it shouldn't be hard to find. See the prairie contacts listed above to help locate a prairie your troop can visit. If they do not have the opportunity to visit a prairie, have them look at pictures of prairies and forests. Guide them through discussions about the following information rather than experiencing it.

If they can see forest from the edge of the prairie, go directly to the prairie. If they can't, visit the forest first. Ask the girls what kind of plants they see. (Trees, shrubs, small plants and maybe flowers on the floor.) Ask about temperature and sunlight. Is it warm or cold? Is it bright or dark? What else do they notice?

At the prairie, have the girls stand at its edge and look at it. Ask them what they see. It won't matter what season you visit the prairie. In spring and summer they'll see flowers and grasses. In winter and fall they'll see dead flowers and grasses. The obvious difference is there are no trees. Prairies are made up of flowers and grasses. Some might be taller than they are but there should be no woody plants with trunks or "hard stems". Everything should be grass-like with fairly flexible stems. That is what makes it a prairie! Have them walk into the prairie. (If the prairie owners allow this. At Black Hawk Council's properties, they can walk anywhere in the prairie they want. If there is an actual trail through the prairie, please use it. If there is not, have the girls all spread out a little so they do not wear out a path. The grasses they may trample will grow back easier that way.) Once in the prairie, ask them what else makes it different from the forest. Focus on temperature – the prairie is more open so it may be hotter than the forest because there is little shade or it may be colder than the forest if there is a lot of wind. The key is that forests are more sheltered and prairies are more exposed. To help them understand this, Ask them which they would want to be in on a really hot day. (Forest will keep them cool and shaded. Prairie will be hot.) Which would they like to be in on a cool fall day with no wind? (Prairie will be warmer because of the sunlight – even on a cloudy day.) What about on a windy winter day? (Forest will be sheltered more from the wind unless the prairie grasses are much taller than the girls. Then the prairie may be warmer for them.) Neither one is better than the other. They are just different. Those differences are what the girls should discover.

A Peek at a Prairie

Visit a prairie. Look at the prairie. A single prairie can have more than 100 different kinds of flowers and grasses! Take a closer look at the prairie plants. Count how many different kinds you can find.

This works best in late spring through early winter. In late winter and early spring most of the seeds from flower heads are gone and much of the grasses have broken off into short stubble so it is hard to see the diversity. The rest of the year it is easy!

Stand at the prairie's edge. Ask the girls how many different kinds of plants they see. (they will probably not notice many varieties at first glance.) Have the girls walk through the prairie to take a closer look. If the prairie owners allow picking of the prairie stems, (all of the ones listed on the first page will most likely allow it) have the girls each pick 3-5 different kinds of plants – just the top part is necessary. Have them stand in a circle and compare each of the flowers and grasses

they have gathered. Count how many different ones the entire group found. Stress that this is just a sampling of what is actually in the prairie. Tell them that prairies have more kinds (species) of flowers and grasses than they would find in most forests or deserts or marshes. Ask them why it is good to have so many different kinds of plants. (many different kinds of animals might live there – each might eat a different kind of seed from the flowers and grasses. If something happens to the soil that stops a certain kind of plant from growing, many more will still grow. Things like pollution might cause this to happen.)

If picking plants is not allowed, have the girls stand in a circle in the prairie. Turn and face out. Look at the prairie plants in front of them. Count how many different ones they find in that small area. Now trade places with a girl next to them. Do they see any plants they saw in their first spot? Do they see any new ones? Then tell them about prairie diversity and ask why it is good. (See last 2 sentences from above paragraph.)

Prairie “Critters”

What kinds of animals might live in a prairie? Where would insects live? Where would birds, mammals and reptiles live? What would they eat? Draw lines to match each group of animals to its prairie home and food source. Draw or cut pictures of prairie animals out of magazines and make a collage.

Insects	nests on the ground, hidden in the grasses	eat flowers, leaves and small animals
Birds	dig holes in the ground	eat insects or leaves
Reptiles & Small mammals	lay down in grass	eat leaves or drink nectar from flowers
Mammals	On the underside leaves or flowers	eat seeds from prairie plants, insects and nectar

Some of the animals living in prairies include:

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| crickets | many birds including: | snakes | foxes |
| grasshoppers | meadow larks | moles | |
| butterflies | finches | voles | |
| moths | pheasants | mice | |
| lady bugs | sandpipers | shrews | |
| beetles | plovers | ground squirrels | |
| caterpillars | blackbirds | gophers | |
| spiders | prairie chickens | badgers | |
| bees | bluebirds | *prairie dogs – not found in | |
| Wisconsin | | | |

Some of the animals that do not necessarily live (make their home) in prairies but spend much of their time in prairies especially to feed include:

- | | | | |
|---------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| Foxes | red tailed hawk | weasels | burrowing owl |
| rabbits | skunks | great horned owl | |
| coyotes | kestrals | deer | |

What they eat is greatly varied.

Prairie Restaurant

Plants use the sun's energy to grow. Some animals eat the plants. Some animals eat other animals. A "prairie restaurant" food chain shows how energy is passed from plants to animals. Create a "prairie restaurant" using plants and animals that live in the prairie. Draw a food chain or play a food chain game from the "Prairie Magic Try-It Booklet."

If the girls are going to create food chains, have them make them as long as possible. Have them start with the sun because that is where plants get their energy. Things like water and soil do not need to be included since food chains depict energy transfer. Here are a few examples:

Sun – cone flower – finch – fox

sun – sunflower – mouse – snake – hawk

sun – prairie grass – caterpillar – bird – weasel – badger

Here are some food chain games they can play

Web of Life

Create name tags for each girl. Either cut pictures of prairie plants and animals out of magazines and hang them on strings for the girls to wear around their necks or write the names of plants and animals on cards for the girls to wear around their necks. Make sure you include a variety of plants and animals as well as some decomposer (creatures that turn dead material back into soil) such as earth worms, various beetles and insect larvae, bacteria and fungi. You can include the sun too. Have the girls sit in a circle wearing their nametags. Take a large ball of string and give one end of it to the girl who is wearing the sun name tag. Ask who in the group needs the sun. All the plants should raise their hands. (Animals don't need sun to survive – just plants.) Unroll the string until it stretches across the circle from the sun to one of the girls wearing a plant. The "plant" holds up her finger. Wrap the string around her finger. Ask if anyone in the group would eat that plant. Pick someone and continue unwrapping the string until it reaches that person. Wrap it around her finger and continue on with who eats her. When you reach the end of a chain, talk about how some plants and animals such as earth worms, some insects and their larvae, bacteria and fungi are decomposers, turning dead things back into soil. Find a decomposer to eat the last animal in the chain "when it dies". Connect her to the string "web" and start with a new plant because it will grow from the soil the decomposer created. Continue winding the string through new food chains until each girl is connected at least once with several being connected more than once. Eventually the girls will see that they have created a large web instead of just a chain. Now ask the girls what would happen if you removed one person from the web.

(The entire thing would fall apart.) Try it. Pick someone to let go. Tell everyone who is connected to her to let go. Now tell everyone who is connected to someone to let go. (At this point everyone should drop the web.) Ask the girls why everything – even bacteria or a small insect – is important to a prairie ecosystem. (Because they are all connected. If one disappears, it eventually affects everything.)

Food Chain Tag

For this game you will need 4 different sets of nametags, enough for one for each player. Using a 4-part prairie food chain, make nametags with a ratio of about 6:4:2:1 starting at the bottom of the chain. For example, if you have 13 girls, have 6 prairie seeds, 4 mice, 2 snakes, and one hawk. Pass out the food chain tag name tags. Go to an open area safe for running. Explain to the girls that each thing must try to tag what it eats without being tagged by what eats it. (Seeds won't tag

anyone and no one will tag the hawks.) If they are tagged, they must kneel on one knee until they count to 30. Then they may start again. Have them try to remember how many times they were eaten during the game. Play for a few minutes. See if it is possible for everyone to be dead at once. Ask the girls "What would happen to all the hawks if everything else was dead?" (They would starve to death and die) What plants/animals got killed the most in the game? Is that what they expected? (There is no right answer.)

Birds, Bugs, and Badgers

This is also a food chain tag only it's a little more complicated. Dived the girls into 3 equal groups and assign each group birds, bugs or badger and their corresponding sign. Bugs must hold up two fingers on one hand above their head to represent antennae. Birds must hold out their index finger in front of their face to represent a beak. Badgers hold their 5 fingers out in front of them in a curved position to look like claws. Badgers tag birds, birds tag bugs, and bugs tag badgers (decomposing bugs eat dead badgers, returning them to soil.) When a girl is tagged, she becomes the same thing that tags her. This is not that hard. After a girl tags someone else, she makes sure they become her sign. The hard part is remembering who they should tag once they become something new. The easiest way is to have them think about tagging the thing they were before they just got tagged. Stop the game after a few minutes and separate the groups. See which group is bigger now. Do this periodically. Talk about what happens when their becomes o whole bunch of something. (Their food might become scarce if there are too many of them and they starve to death.)

Food Chain Concentration

Create a deck of Food Chain Concentration cards. Using 3x5 note cards, create about 35-50 cards with names or pictures of prairie plants and animals, the sun, or decomposers on one side. Make as many different as possible. When you run out of ideas, just use the same ones over again. To play the game, spread all the cards out with picture/writing side down. If you have more than 5 or 6 players, make teams. Each player or team takes turns turning 2 cards face up. If the 2 cards can be linked next to each other in a food chain (one eats/uses the other), the player keeps the 2 cards. If not, they are turned back over in the same spot. Everyone takes turns trying to match cards until no more matches can be made. The player/team with the most cards in the end wins.

Prairie Dominoes

Create a deck of 3x5 note cards with names or pictures of prairie plants and animals on them. Make about 50-60 cards. Make 3 or 4 "sun" cards and 3 or 4 decomposer cards. If you have more than 4 or 5 players, make teams. Deal out about 8 cards per person/team and put the rest in a pile. Whomever has a sun card closest to the dealers left goes first, laying the sun in the center. The person to her left goes next. If she has a plant, she lays in touching any one of the 4 sides of the sun card. If she cannot play, she draws a card from the pile and the next person goes. If the next player has a plant, she puts it on one of the 3 remaining openings on the sun or attaches an animal that eats plants to one of the plant sides. This continues until one person plays all her cards. Sun cards can be played to start new chains and plant cards can be played on decomposer cards. If no one has won by the time all the cards in the pile have been picked, each person just passes when they cannot play. Cards picked off the pile cannot be played until the next round.

Help a Prairie Grow

Help the prairie plants and critters by collecting or planting prairie seeds. Call Your Girl Scout Council to see what your Girl Scout Troop can do. City, county, or state parks can use your help too.

Prairie "Pictures"

*Create an art or craft project about a prairie. Draw or paint a picture of a prairie. Or use prairie plants to create a design. Prairie grasses can be braided into a bracelet or necklace. Or weave a basket or wall hanging using the plants. **Be sure to get permission from the prairie owner before picking any plants.*

Let the girls be creative but try to judge around how much material is needed for the project so the girls understand not to be wasteful. Prairie plants grow back each year but the part that is above ground only lives through the summer. It may be better to use the plants after they die to make a project than while they are still growing. Encourage them to pick plants where there are several of the same kind in an area and leave some of each kind still growing.

Helping Prairie Wildlife

Help the animals that live in the prairie. Build or put up an animal shelter such as a butterfly box, bluebird box or other bird house. Plant plants to help attract certain animals. You might even try growing the plants yourself. Talk to Black Hawk Council's Environmental Educator for more ideas.

Contact one of the organizations on the list on the first page of this booklet or the owner of a prairie for ideas on how to help.