

## Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem



### What is the Sagebrush Steppe?

The Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem is a type of grassland that doesn't have trees, is hot and dry in the summer, is cold and windy in the winter, has a high elevation, and is mostly flat. Does that sound like places you know in Wyoming? Almost half of the state of Wyoming is considered a Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem.

### So how do plants and animals live in this ecosystem?

Plants that live there, like sagebrush, use the plentiful sunlight to make its food. Many plants will store water when it is available so that they can survive times when it is dry. Animals, like the pronghorn and the sage-grouse, depend on sagebrush for food, shelter, and even water that is stored in the plant.

### Why is the Sagebrush Steppe important?

To humans, the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem can look empty, without any life at all, but when you take a closer look at these large open areas covered with sagebrush, grasses, and other plants you can see that there are actually quite a lot of animals who call the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem their home. In fact, 400 types or species of plants provide habitat, food, and even water for over 250 species of animals.

Sagebrush Ecosystem Photos

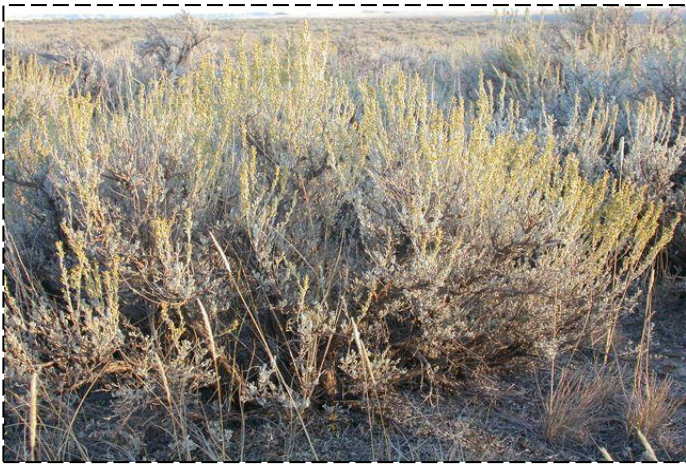
White-tail Jackrabbit



Short-horned Lizard



Sagebrush



Scarlet Globemallow



Coyote



Darkling Beetle



Sagebrush Ecosystem Photos

Sage Thrasher



White-tail Prairie Dog



Rabbitbrush



Prairie Falcon



Greater Sage-grouse



Pronghorn



Sagebrush Ecosystem Photos

Sagebrush Vole



Brewer's Sparrow



Harvester Ant



Western Wheatgrass



The Sun



White-tailed Jackrabbit

Name: White-tailed Jackrabbit  
Scientific Name: *Lepus townsendii*  
Predators: Coyotes, fox, raptors  
Prey or Food: Plant matter

Did you know? The jackrabbit can camouflage with brown fur in the summer and white fur in the winter.

Short-horned Lizard

Name: Short-horned Lizard  
Scientific Name: *Phrynosoma douglassi*  
Predators: Coyotes, birds, snakes  
Prey or Food: Insects

Did you know? To escape predators, short-horned lizards can inflate their bodies up to twice their size.

Wyoming Big Sagebrush

Name: Wyoming Big Sagebrush  
Scientific Name: *Artemisia tridentata*  
Predators: Pronghorn, birds, small mammals  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? Cowboys used to rub sagebrush on themselves to combat bad odors before heading to town.

Scarlet Globemallow

Name: Scarlet Globemallow  
Scientific Name: *Sphaeralcea coccinea*  
Predators: Bees, butterflies, birds (pollen) and herbivores  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? This plant survives well in the sagebrush ecosystem because it doesn't need a lot moisture and can withstand strong winds.

Coyote

Name: Coyote  
Scientific Name: *Canis latrans*  
Predators: Humans, wolves  
Prey or Food: small mammals, eggs, carrion

Did you know? The coyotes ability to eat a wide variety of prey has allowed them to live in almost every habitat in the US.

Darkling Beetle

Name: Darkling Beetle  
Scientific Name: *Eleodes hispilabris*  
Predators: Reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals  
Prey or Food: decaying matter, cow dung

Did you know? When disturbed, this beetle can spray a foul smelling chemical.

Sage Thrasher

Name: Sage Thrasher  
Scientific Name: Oreoscoptes montanus  
Predators: Raptors, fox, coyotes, badger (eggs)  
Prey or Food: Insects, berries

Did you know? Sage thrashers can imitate the songs and calls of other birds.

White-tail Prairie Dog

Name: White-tailed Prairie Dog  
Scientific Name: Cynomys leucurus  
Predators: Badgers, ferrets, raptors  
Prey or Food: Plant matter

Did you know? Prairie dog "towns" are complex societies with a vast underground burrows and sophisticated communication system.

Rabbitbrush

Name: Rubber Rabbitbrush  
Scientific Name: Ericameria Nauseosa  
Predators: Bees, butterflies, birds (pollen) and herbivores  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? Rabbitbrush was used to make a yellow dye, chewing gum, and can produce a rubber-like substance.

Prairie Falcon

Name: Prairie Falcon  
Scientific Name: Falco mexicanus  
Predators: Other raptors  
Prey or Food: Small mammals, other birds, reptiles

Did you know? Prairie Falcon build their nests in cliffs.

Greater Sage-grouse

Name: Greater Sage-grouse  
Scientific Name: Centrocercus urophasianus  
Predators: Raptors, fox, coyotes, badger (eggs)  
Prey or Food: sagebrush, grasses, flowers, insects

Did you know? The boom of strutting males during mating season can be heard a mile away.

Pronghorn

Name: Pronghorn  
Scientific Name: Antilocapra americana  
Predators: Pronghorns used to be hunted by the now extinct American Cheetah.  
Prey or Food: Sagebrush, other shrubs, grasses

Did you know? The pronghorn can sprint as fast as 60mph and can sustain a speed of 30 mph for miles.

Sagebrush Vole

Name: Sagebrush Vole  
Scientific Name: Lemmings curtatus  
Predators: Coyotes, fox, raptors  
Prey or Food: Sagebrush, rabbitbrush, flowers

Did you know? Sagebrush voles have been known to shelter in and even eat undigested plant matter from cow "pies".

Brewer's Sparrow

Name: Brewer's Sparrow  
Scientific Name: Spizella breweri  
Predators: Raptors, fox, coyotes, badger (eggs)  
Prey or Food: Insects, grass, seeds

Did you know? This little brown bird can be hard to spot but easy to hear singing to establish territories.

Harvester Ant

Name: Harvester Ant  
Scientific Name: Pogonomyrmex occidentalis  
Predators: Reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals  
Prey or Food: seeds, pollen

Did you know? They gather food items to store in their mounds for winter months.

Western Wheatgrass

Name: Western Wheatgrass  
Scientific Name: Pascopyrum smithii  
Predators: Rodents  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? This is Wyoming's "State Grass".

The Sun

Plants use the sun's energy to grow through a process known as photosynthesis. Because plants are the beginning of all food chains, all plants and animals transfer the sun's energy when they eat.