



## Ladybugs

We are very small, and most of us eat other small tasty bugs such as aphids and scale insects. We have a few cousins that eat crops and plants instead of bugs!

We were so good at helping farmers and gardeners that people started buying ladybugs to release in their fields and yards. In North America, people also brought in ladybugs from other countries, such as the Asian Lady Beetle. One of our native ladybugs got crowded out, so there aren't many nine-spotted ladybugs any more. We can help, but be sure to release us in our native habitats.



## Bats

We are experts at eating flying insects. We swoop around and can eat thousands of flying insects in one night! We are active at night (nocturnal) when most people are asleep.

We avoid people, but if we get stuck indoors just turn off the lights, shut the inside doors, and open outside doors and windows, and we'll find our way outside.



## Critter Cards



### Willows

We are shrubs that grow along the edges of streams and beaver ponds. Our roots spread out and grow deep. They help hold the soil and keep it from getting washed away by floods.

When we are introduced to a new area that we like, some of our species can grow and spread rapidly.



### Bullsnakes or Garter Snakes

We bullsnakes live in dry fields and around farms. We like to eat small mammals like prairie dogs and other rodents. Although we bullsnakes can grow to be very big (8 feet long and as thick as your leg), we are not venomous. And we garter snakes may only grow to 4 feet long, so we eat the smaller rodents around our homes in meadows, marshes, and woodlands.



## Peregrine Falcons

We are hawk-like birds that are built for speed. We live and nest near high cliffs, canyon walls, and even skyscrapers. We catch smaller birds to eat. Ecosystems with steep walls and plenty of birds can be good places for us.



## Squirrels

In the autumn, we collect acorns from oak trees and store them to eat in winter. Sometimes we hide our acorns underground. The only problem is we collect so many acorns that sometimes we forget where we've buried them! Some of these acorns sprout and grow into tall trees.

If you see a black-furred brother or sister of ours, it is the same species as a gray or fox squirrel—it just was born a different color!



## Native Grasses

We grow fast, and our deep roots help keep soil from blowing away in the wind and washing away in the rain. We are often the first plants to grow where the soil has been disturbed, and we can tolerate long periods with little water.

We also filter rainwater and help prevent floods. We can even absorb extra nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizers and farms, and keep these from flowing into streams. It doesn't cost much money to plant us, and we don't need a lot of care to stay healthy.



## Gambusia Fish

We enjoy the nice warm waters of ponds and lakes. One reason is that mosquitoes do, too! A female adult mosquito lays her eggs in the water. The eggs hatch into wiggly worm-like animals that stay underwater. Eventually, they turn into flying mosquitoes. It's those underwater mosquito wigglers that we love to eat!

I don't naturally occur in most of the United States.



## Woodpeckers

We live in forests. We peck out the insects that live under the bark of sick or dead trees called snags. We also use our beaks to chip deep holes into trees where we build our nests. Sometimes these holes are used by other birds, such as bluebirds and nuthatches, for their nests. Our holes help to bring new varieties of birds into the forest.



## Beavers

Using our big front teeth, we cut down trees and shrubs, chew them into smaller sticks, and build small dams. These dams help to slow down the water in streams and make deep, slow-moving pools that are great for wildlife and plants that like slower water. Our dams also slow down the water near our homes. Our homes are called lodges, and we enter these lodges from underwater to stay away from predators!



# Critter Cards



## Western or Eastern Meadowlarks

We are robin-sized birds that live in fields and on farms. We are known for our beautiful song and the black “V” on our chests. Many people don’t know we like to eat many insects.

We build our nests on the ground!



## Trees

We trees do many good things for the environment. Our roots help to hold soil in place. We provide shade and keep areas cool. Our leaves help clear the air of some kinds of pollution, and remove CO<sub>2</sub> while adding oxygen to the air.

Plant diverse species of us that are suited to a habitat. Greater diversity allows some of us to keep living if a species-specific pest kills some of us—like when the emerald ash borer targets ash trees.



## American Badgers

We live in underground burrows in dry fields. We are reclusive and avoid people. Although we are not much bigger than a small dog, we are tough and ready to defend ourselves. We dig underground to eat small, furry creatures like prairie dogs, mice, squirrels, and groundhogs.



## Swift Fox

We are small foxes that are about the size of a house cat. We hunt at night. Our favorite prey is the prairie dog, but we will eat other small mammals, birds, fish, and insects. We live in dens or abandoned burrows. We have lost most of our habitat, which is the short-grass prairie.