



Western Meadowlark

Sturnella neglecta

- About 8.5 inches tall
- Average wingspan is 16 inches
- Average lifespan is 5-8 years
- Nests on the ground in open grasslands, prairies, pastures and fields across western and central North America
- Prefer thinner, drier vegetation
- Feeds mostly on bugs but will also eat seeds and berries
- Has a distinctive flute-like warbled song call
- Often feed in flocks in the winter
- Permanent residents, don't migrate
- Eggs are incubated by the female for 13-15 days
- Young birds are capable of sustained flight at around 21 days



Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

- Typically prey on rodents or small animals, and sometimes snakes or other small birds
- Build nests high up in trees or sometimes on a cliff ledge or building
- Average lifespan is 20 years in the wild
- With amazing eyesight, they can spot a mouse on the ground from 100 feet in the air
 - Eyesight is 8x as powerful as a humans
- Have a third eyelid called a nictitating membrane = shields their eyes from the wind or protects them when going in to make a kill
- Talons up to 1.33 inches long
- Wingspan averages a little over 4 feet
- Females are typically much larger than males, which is common among raptors
- Incubate eggs for 28-35 days
- The male does the hunting and brings prey to the female, who then feeds it to the young in smaller pieces
- Partially migrate to the south for winter if from Canada, Alaska, or northernmost Great Plains
- Juveniles don't get the red feathers until the start of their 2nd year and instead have sporting brown tails
- 14 subspecies with many color varieties



American Robin

Turdus migratorius

- Average lifespan in the wild is anywhere from 2 years to 5-6 years
- Average 10 inches in length
- Can be found in grassy areas, gardens and woodlands
- Most active during the daytime
- Mostly eat fruits and berries in the fall and winter, with more worms and insects like grasshoppers and caterpillars in their spring and summer diets
- Many northern robin populations migrate south during the winter in search of food, others remain somewhat local, forming groups that roam the countryside in search of the berries they prefer during the cold winter months.
- Lay 5-6 blue eggs that take about 14 days to hatch
- Snakes, hawks, and cats hunt robins; squirrels, blue jays, and cats eat robin eggs and chicks
- Males and females look similar but males typically have brighter colors



Barn Owl

Tyto alba

- Average lifespan is 2-4 years
- Most die young, 70% die within their first year
- 12-16 inches in length with wingspans of 3.5 feet
- Birds of prey that hunt small mammals like mice, voles, rats, and shrews
- Nocturnal creatures who hunt during dawn and dusk and swallow prey whole
- Their feet are their most important tool = have incredibly long legs with sharp talons to crush, stab, or suffocate their prey
- Don't hoot but rather produce a shrill, loud screech
- Farmers love them because they offer pest control, eating a rat a day or more than their body weight in food
- Use their pellets to build nests along with prey fur or feathers, leaves and bark from trees
- Monogamous and mate for life



Burrowing Owl

Athene cunicularia

- Average lifespan of 6-8 years in the wild
- One of the smallest owls at only 9 inches tall, with females being smaller than males which is unusual for owls
- Live in deserts, fields, and plains of western North America, migrating to the southwestern US during winter
- Diet includes small birds, rodents, fish, reptiles and large insects
- Form permanent pair bonds
- Nest underground, usually in abandoned burrows dug by another animals, such as prairie dogs, but on occasion will dig their own burrows
- Diurnal = most active during the day
- Males line the nest with grasses, roots and dung, with the odor from the dung helping to protect the eggs from predators.
- Females lay 5-9 round white eggs, and parents take turns incubating the eggs for about 4 weeks before they hatch.
- While still in the nest, the owlets' distress cry mimics the sound of a rattlesnake and scares off predators.
- The only small owl species to perch on the ground = so terrestrial that when disturbed, they will often run or flatten themselves against the ground rather than fly away



Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

- Lifespan of 20-30 years old
- Typically live in home ranges that have open habitat, such as fields, wetlands, pastures, or agricultural crop lands, in addition to forested areas
- Can be found in swamps, woodlands, orchards, agricultural areas, and are common in wooded parks in cities
- Have the most diverse diet of all North American raptors: prey ranges in size, eating mostly mammals and birds – especially rabbits, mice, voles, squirrels, prairie dogs, ducks, doves, reptiles, insects, fish, invertebrates and sometimes even raptors
- Usually nocturnal hunters but can sometimes hunt in broad daylight
- Hunt in woodland edges, meadows, wetlands, open water, or other habitats
- Talons can exert pressure of 300 pounds per square inch, which helps to sever the spines of their prey
- Usually adopt a nest that was built by another species
- Mated pairs are monogamous
- Unattended eggs and nestlings may fall prey to foxes, coyotes, raccoons, lynx, raptors, crows, and ravens.



Mule Deer

Odocoileus hemionus

- Lifespan of 9-11 years
- Known for their uniquely large ears that resemble that of a mule's
- Weigh from 130 – 300 lbs
- Found in western North America, from Alaska to Mexico
- As many as 11 subspecies of mule deer
- Herbivores with a 4 chambered stomach
- May change their diets seasonally = green, herbaceous, flowering plants during the summer, woody vegetation during the winter
- Not all migrate, but migration is prompted by changes in food availability
- Annual cycle of antler growth is regulated by changes in the length of the day
- Females usually give birth to two fawns, although if it is their first time having a baby they often only have one fawn.
- No upper teeth, only a hard palate



Coyote

Canis latrans

- Lifespan between 10 and 14 years
- Found in the arid regions of North America
- Anywhere from 15 – 45 lbs
- Expert hunter of rodents and rabbits = great pest control, can keep populations of mice, voles, prairie dogs, and gophers at bay
- Will even eat lizards and insects
- Omnivores = will happily feast on berries, fallen fruit, and vegetables
- Mate for life
- Can reach speeds of 35 – 43 mph
- Can make 11 different noises to communicate with animals inside and outside the pack



Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes

- Average lifespan of 2-4 years
- Found throughout North America, Europe, temperate Asia, and northern Africa
- The most widespread meat-eating mammals on the planet (largest natural distribution of any land mammal except than human beings)
- Live in open areas like woodlands, rural and suburban neighborhoods, wetlands, and brushy fields
- Omnivore = eats rabbits, mice, rodents, berries, frogs, grasshoppers, and birds
- Hunt at night
- Have excellent hearing = can hear rodents digging miles underground
- Have more than 20 different calls
- Mate in the winter



Striped Skunk

Mephitis mephitis

- Average lifespan of 3 years
- Nocturnal, most active at night
- Live in open areas and can thrive in many habitats, including forests and grassy plains
- Found in the US, Canada, Mexico, and South America
- Omnivores = eat fruit and plants, as well as insects, bird eggs, small rodents, fish, and birds
- Prey for birds like the Great Horned Owl
- Birds don't have a very good sense of smell, making the skunk's spray useless
- The spray comes from 2 glands at the base of the skunk's tail and it can hit a target from 12 feet away
- Baby skunks (called skits) can spray at only 8 days old, 2 weeks before they even open their eyes
- Considered to be 1 of the 4 wild animals that are primary carriers of the rabies virus



Raccoon

Procyon lotor

- Average lifespan of 2-3 years
- Omnivores and opportunistic eaters = feeding on whatever is most convenient, including nuts, berries, fruits, acorns, grasshoppers, mice, fish, frogs, insects, small mammals, and ground-dwelling birds and their eggs
- Found throughout the continental US, Canada, and Central America
- Make their dens in the ground, hollow trees, or in crevices in rocks; in urban areas, they make their dens in attics, chimneys, and crawl spaces underneath houses
- Distinctive dark markings help deflect the sun's glare and also may enhance night vision
- Use their nimble finger-like toes to hold and manipulate food, as well as a range of objects, including latches, lids, jars, boxes, and doorknobs
- Don't hibernate during winter
- Solitary animals
- Nocturnal
- Breed only once per year, giving birth to 3-4 babies
- After bats, raccoons are the 2nd most frequently reported rabid wildlife species



Beaver

Castor canadensis

- Average lifespan of 10-12 years
- Can weigh 40 – 70 lbs
- 2nd largest rodent (gnawing animal) in the world, behind the South American capybara
- Herbivore = eats leaves, roots, and bark from trees and aquatic plants
- Can digest cellulose (humans cannot), which is a major part of their diet
- Primarily nocturnal
- Need water to survive = can live in or around freshwater ponds, lakes, rivers, marshes, and swamps
- Can swim underwater for up to 15 minutes
- Nose and ears shut to keep water out and they have transparent inner eyelids to help them see
- Ecosystem engineers: Second only to humans, beavers alter their environment more than any other organism on the planet
- Homes are called lodges = little dome-shaped houses made from woven sticks, grasses and moss plastered with mud found on the banks of ponds, on islands or on lake shores, just barely above water level
- Monogamous
- Very social and live in groups called colonies
- Give birth to 1 to 6 babies
- Do not hibernate



Little Brown Bat

Myotis lucifugus

- Average lifespan of 6-7 years
- Bats make up ¼ of the world's mammals
- Can eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes an hour
- Diet includes fruit and flying insects such as mosquitoes, beetles, flying ants, moths, midges, and mayflies
- Use echolocation = emit a high frequency sound that bounces off objects in their environment
- Pollinators for fruits such as avocados, bananas, and mangos
- The only flying mammal
- Can reach speeds of 100 mph
- Baby bats are called pups; a group of bats is called a colony
- Bat scat (called guano) is a rich fertilizer



Black-tailed Prairie Dog

Cynomys ludovicianus

- Average lifespan is 4-5 years in the wild
- Found in western US
- Herbivores = diet includes grasses, plants, and weeds
- Keystone species = critical to the entire ecosystem
- Support at least 136 other species through their various activities
- Key food source for everything from coyotes to hawks to endangered black-footed ferrets
- One of a few rodents who don't hibernate
- Diurnal = active during the day and sleep at night
- Prairie dog towns, or underground colonies, provide shelter for jackrabbits, toads, and rattlesnakes
- Complex underground burrows with designated areas for nurseries, sleeping, and toilets
- Mate once year in the winter, giving birth to litters of 3-8 pups with a 50% survival rate
- Their vocabulary is more advanced than any other animal language that's been decoded = can alert colony members in detail such as height and color (a tall human wearing blue)



Prarie Rattlesnake

Crotalus viridis

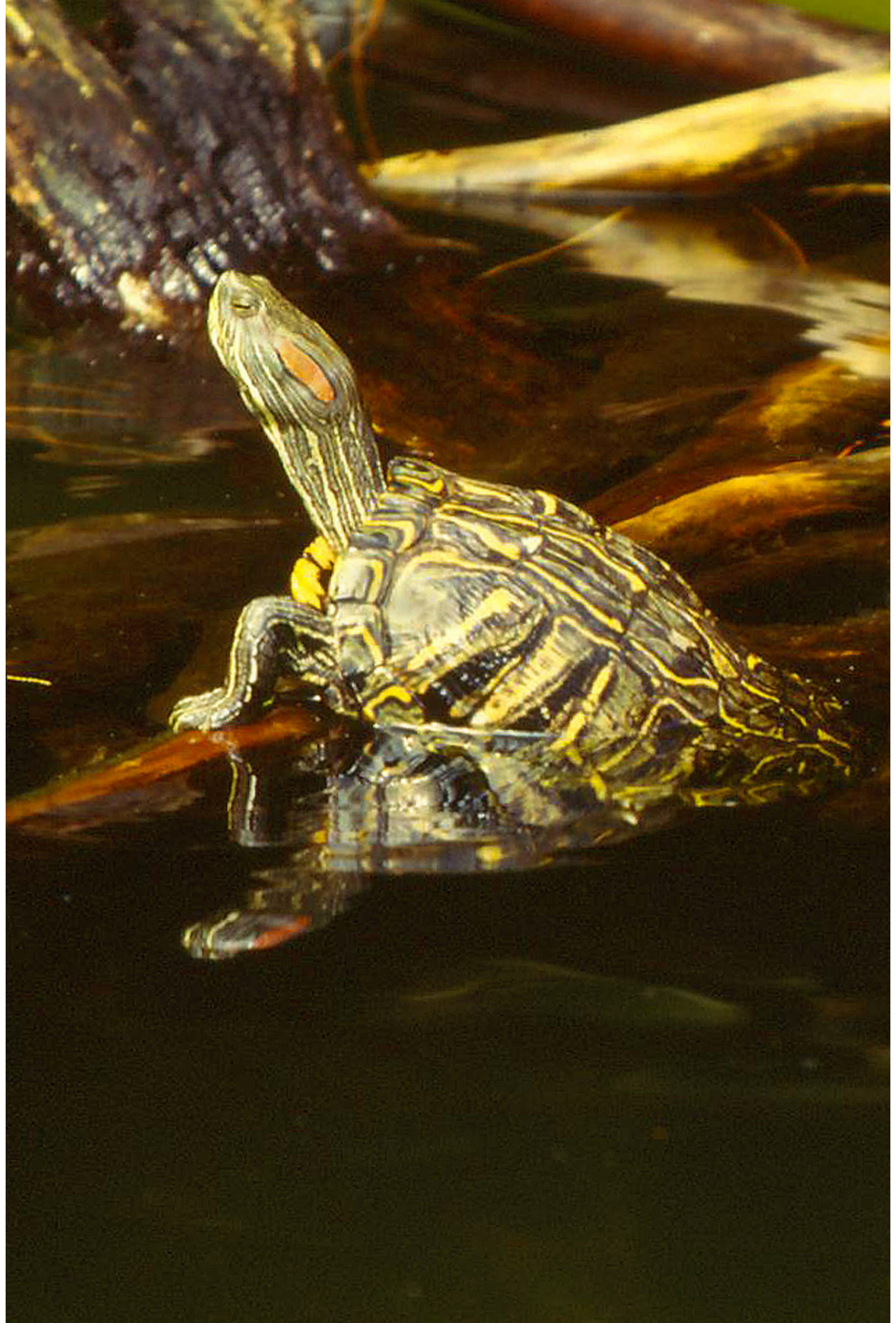
- Average lifespan of 16-20 years
- Can grow up to 5 feet long
- Eat all sorts of prey, including mice, small birds, gophers, prairies dogs, and any other small mammal they may find
- Use their tongue to smell = by sticking their tongue in and out, rattlesnakes pick up microscopic particles that tell them what they're smelling
- Ambush predators = hunt prey until they are within striking distance
- Striking distance is about half its body length
- Injects venom into its prey, waits for it to die, then swallows it whole
- Thermosensitive = can detect heat very well
- Have a heat-sensitive pit on each side of their head between the nostril and the eye
- Coldblooded
- Can rattle their tail up to 90 times per second = one of the fastest sustained vertebrate movements—faster than the wingbeat of a hummingbird (70 beats per second)
- Has the largest range of any rattlesnake species in the country, extending through the Great Plains, stretching from Canada to Mexico
- Live in open grasslands and prairies, may also seek out forested environments
- Number of chambers in a snake's rattle represents how many times it has shed its skin, which shed an average of twice per year, but because rattle chambers can break, the number of rattles on a snake's tail do not indicate its age.
- Hunted by Red-tailed hawks and Golden Eagles
- Viviparous = gives live birth opposed to laying eggs, to about 8-17 young during late summer



Bullsnake

Pituophis catenifer sayi

- Average size of 4 to 8 feet
- Lifespan of up to 12 years in the wild
- Can be found all over North America, from Canada to Mexico
- Lives in habitats such as grasslands, farms, and open areas
- Diet includes large mice, gophers, and other small mammals; birds, eggs, frogs, and lizards make up a smaller part of the diet
- Males are larger than females, which is unusual for snakes
- Makes a sound like a bull snorting
- Spends most of its day in a burrow and has a shield on its nose to help it dig.
- Non-venomous and kills its prey by strangulation
- When threatened, a bullsnake can mimic a venomous rattlesnake by puffing up its body, shaking its tail, and hissing.
- Oviparous = egg-layers
- The entire body of a snake is covered with scales – even its eyes! Because of this, snakes have no eyelids and cannot blink or close their eyes.



Red-eared Slider Turtle

Trachemys scripta elegans

- Can live up to 20 years in the wild
- Feed mainly on plants and small animals, such as crickets, fish, crayfish, snails, tadpoles, worms, aquatic insects and aquatic plants
- Live in ponds, lakes, marshes, and in slow-moving rivers that have soft, muddy bottoms
- Don't have teeth, but instead have horny ridges that have little sharp grooves, like a serrated knife on their upper and lower jaws
- Communicate with touch and vibrations
- Diurnal and semiaquatic, spending most of their time in the water
- Coldblooded = leave the water to sunbathe to regulate their temperature
- Do not hibernate but brumate = brumation can occur when temperatures drop below 50 degrees F and turtles enter a state of sopor (deep sleep), wherein they do not sleep or defecate, remaining nearly motionless
- Have very sharp vision = have receptors that can see ultraviolet, violet, blue, green, and red light
- A baby turtle will become a boy or girl depending on the temperature within the nest = eggs incubated at warmer temperatures become females
- Males are slightly smaller than females and have longer claws on their front feet
- Common in the pet trade and are now considered among the world's 100 most invasive species because people get tired of them and release them into the wild



Monarch Butterfly

Danaus plexippus

- Average lifespan of 6-8 months
- Herbivore = adults feed on a wide variety of nectar bearing flowers
- Monarch butterflies in the caterpillar stage feed only on milkweed
- Can be found in North, Central, and South America as well as Australia, some Pacific Islands, India, and Western Europe
- Poisonous to predators because of its symbiotic relationship with milkweed
- Monarch caterpillars eat 200 times their weight in milkweed
- North American monarchs migrate over 2,500 miles from Canada and the US to Southern California or central Mexico
- Scientists aren't sure how migrating monarchs know which way to go, since they only live a few months and none of them make the journey more than once.
- Invertebrates = no backbone
- Flaps its wings 5-12 times per second
- *Danaus plexippus* stands for “sleepy transformation”