

midwest ecosystems

BIG IDEA

The living things that are part of prairie, woodland & wetland ecosystems interact with each other and the non-living things around them.

The Midwest is a geographic area of the United States that is made up of twelve states including Illinois. An ecosystem includes all of the plants, animals, and other living things in an area as well as their non-living physical surroundings (light, soil, water, wind, temperature). Studying ecosystems includes exploring interactions among and between living and non-living things, for example in food chains. In the Midwest, there are at least three major ecosystems: prairies, wetlands, and woodlands.

Before the Trip

Show students pictures of local prairie, woodland, and wetland ecosystems.

Have students describe major characteristics of each type. Define interactions. Have students brainstorm interactions that might be observed in an ecosystem (e.g. competition for food or shelter, pollination, physical contact, etc.).

Review expectations for field trip behavior. If appropriate, introduce any activities students will complete during their field trip visit (e.g. completing a field trip worksheet) and review any relevant directions and vocabulary.

Enhance your field trip with a workshop! Turn to page 16 for more information.

At the Museum

Observe plants, animals, and non-living things that are part of prairie, woodland, and wetland ecosystems.

At group check-in, each class will be provided with a custom tour card to assist them on their self-guided visit through the Museum. The custom itinerary will call attention to whole exhibits as well as specific exhibit components that best support this focused field trip.

Attached and included in your e-mailed field trip packet is a worksheet (best suited for students in grades 3–8) developed by Nature Museum educators. Please feel free to print this worksheet and have your students bring it on the day of your visit.

After the Trip

Have each student choose one of the ecosystems observed at the museum.

Place students in groups of 3 or 4 according to each ecosystem, and have each student choose one living or non-living thing that he/she observed as part of that ecosystem. Each student in the group should choose something different. Provide each group with a large piece of paper, and have each student draw what he/she chose in one of the corners.

As a group, students should draw arrows between these living and non-living things and write how they interact with each other. Students can fill in the background of their paper with drawings and labels of the other observations they made of their ecosystem.

Next Generation Science Standards

NGSS: LS2.A – Interdependent relationships in ecosystems

midwest ecosystems worksheet

An ecosystem includes all of the plants, animals, and other living things in an area, as well as their non-living physical surroundings (light, soil, water, wind, temperature). Studying ecosystems includes exploring interactions among and between living and non-living things, for example in food chains. In the Midwest, three of our major ecosystems are prairies, wetlands, and woodlands.

DIRECTIONS

Find examples of prairie, wetland, or woodland ecosystems at the Museum. Choose two, each from a different exhibition. Draw and write what you observe about each ecosystem. Be sure to record the plants, animals, and surroundings (e.g. light, soil, water, wind, temperature).

Exhibit: _____			
Ecosystem (circle one):	Prairie	Woodland	Wetland

Exhibit: _____			
Ecosystem (circle one):	Prairie	Woodland	Wetland

What do these ecosystems have in common? _____

What interactions occur in both ecosystems? _____
