

NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS

A. Science as Inquiry

Understanding about scientific inquiry

C. Life Science

K–4

Organisms and their environments

- o All animals depend on plants. Some animals eat plants for food. Other animals eat animals that eat plants.
- o When the environment changes, some plants and animals survive and reproduce and others die or move to new locations.
- o All organisms cause changes in the environment where they live. Some of these changes are detrimental to the organism or other organisms, whereas others are beneficial.
- o Humans depend on their natural and constructed environments. Humans change environments in ways that can be either beneficial or detrimental for themselves and other organisms.

5–8

Diversity and adaptations of organisms

- o Extinction of a species occurs when the environment changes and the adaptive characteristics of a species are insufficient to allow its survival.

F. Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

K–4

Changes in environments

- o Changes in environments can be natural or influenced by humans.
- o Some environmental changes occur slowly, and others occur rapidly.

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Publishing services by South Pacific Press

Designed by ThinkSpace Design

Art Director: Moonhee Pak

Editorial Director: Stacey Faulkner

Published in the United States of America by

Creative Teaching Press Inc.

P.O. Box 2723

Huntington Beach, CA 92647-0723

www.creativeteaching.com

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ISBN 978-1-59198-703-1

CTP 5732

Printed in the United States of America.

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PRAIRIES BEFORE PEOPLE

Fifty thousand years ago the world was a very different place. People lived mostly in Africa and in Eurasia (Europe and Asia). Many lived in open grasslands—on prairies that had formed over thousands of years.



The green areas show where people lived 50,000 years ago.



If you could travel back in time to a North American prairie of 50,000 years ago, what would you see? You wouldn't see any people—but spread out before you would be enormous herds of mammoths, camels, mastodons, and other plant-eating animals (herbivores).

You would also see meat-eating animals (carnivores) like saber-toothed cats, short-faced bears, cheetahs, manned lions, and dire wolves hunting the herbivores. Many of these animals were so big that modern scientists call them megafauna.

mega (very large) + **fauna** (animals) = **megafauna**



North American megafauna about 50,000 years ago

LOST GIANTS

As the world's climate became colder, people were able to move to previously **uninhabited** places. As more and more water was locked up in ice on the land, sea levels dropped. This opened up a land bridge that allowed people to move across from Eurasia



Migration out of Eurasia into North America, South America, and Australia

into North America.

As people moved into parts of the world where people had never lived before, including Australia and South America, they found prairies covered with megafauna.



Prairies are called different things in different parts of the world.



Mitchell Grasslands in Australia



Kirghiz Steppe in Central Asia



In the tropical grasslands of northern Australia, the wet season is called The Big Wet.

The world's prairies

