

TEACHER GUIDE: Letter 4: Tarantula

CONCEPTS COVERED

Plant community—grassland

Characteristics

Animals that live there

Representative animal—tarantula

Characteristics

Enemies

Defense

Arthropods

Fire on the Reserve

Flowers on the Reserve

Seeds

Tarantula hawks

Staying safe on the Plateau

Don't put hands and feet where you can't see, as in cracks or crevices of rocks

Trail manners and safety

Don't stomp or drag your feet

Don't pick up any animal

CONTENT VOCABULARY

- arachnid—any of a group of animals that resemble insects but have eight rather than six legs, no wings or antennae, and a body divided into two parts; e.g. scorpions, spiders, mites, and ticks
- arthropod—a large group of animals with segmented bodies, hard shells on the outside of their bodies, jointed legs, and no bones inside their bodies; e.g. insects, spiders, centipedes, crabs
- bunchgrass—a type of grass that grows in bunches
- burrow—a hole or tunnel dug by a small animal for use as a home or a hiding place
- exoskeleton—a hard, protective outer body covering such as the shell of a beetle or a lobster; an external skeleton
- grassland—plant community where grasses are the most common plant and with very few, if any, bushes or trees
- herbivore—an animal that only feeds on plants
- nectar—a sugary substance produced by plants; made into honey by bees
- nocturnal—active at night
- nutrient—an ingredient in food that helps people, animals, and plants live and grow; proteins, vitamins, and minerals

- paralyze—to take away the ability to move or feel in a part or parts of the body
- pollen—the fine, dust-like, yellow powder found on the inside of flowers
- pollinate—the process of moving pollen from one flower to another which changes the receiving flower into seed or seeds
- skeleton—the inner framework of bones, cartilage, or woody fiber that supports the body of an animal or plant
- tarantula—a large, hairy spider found in the warmer parts of North, Central, and South America;
- venom—the poison that certain snakes, insects, scorpions and other animals produce; put into prey by biting or stinging

OTHER WORDS TO KNOW

amazing	clump	fangs	male	stomp
ashes	colorful	female	mammal	wasp
bunch	control	inject	spider	

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- In which plant community might you see a tarantula?
- What are some facts that you learned about tarantulas?
- How are male tarantulas different from female tarantulas?
- Tarantulas don't have bones inside their bodies like you do. They have an exoskeleton. What is an exoskeleton? Name another animal that has an exoskeleton.
- How do tarantulas defend themselves?
- What is a tarantula hawk? Why don't tarantulas want to meet one?
- What was one thing you learned about the grassland habitat?
- Besides the tarantula, name another animal that lives in the grassland. Where do most animals in the grassland find shelter?
- Why aren't there snake holes? Why might you see a snake go into a hole?
- What are two things you learned about badgers?
- Why do plants have flowers?
- Fire is important. Why

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

Think about what you learned about a spider. Look carefully at the picture of the tarantula. Now, do a little research. Look at pictures of insects. Make a chart or a Venn diagram comparing spiders and insects. The next time you see a creepy-crawly thing, try to identify it—spider or insect (Be safe--don't pick it up in your hand)

Look at a flower. A bigger, bell-shaped flower is better than a small flower. (Maybe your teacher can bring some in or get permission before you pick one.) Carefully take the flower apart. Look at all the different parts of the flower. Can you see the pollen? Can you find the seeds? If you want to know more about the parts of a flower, use a book or encyclopedia and do some research.