



Earth Stewardship

Caring for Earth and all her inhabitants

Unitarian Universalists believe it is our responsibility to recognize and protect the value of all people, living things, and resources on our planet. We do this by conserving energy, recycling, and cleaning up pollution. Our Clinton Fellowship is a "Green Sanctuary" candidate which means we are creating a religious community that has a fundamental, bottom-line, commitment to living in harmony with the Earth. We believe we can all do our part to take care of Earth and so can you!

"Sea of Grass"



Close your eyes and imagine that you are a pioneer girl or boy, heading West with your family in a covered wagon. It is the middle of a sunny morning, and you have just crossed the Mississippi River. You get out of your wagon and look ahead, and all you can see is grass. You can't see to the end of it. It's everywhere. Some of it is short and clumpy, and some of it is very tall—much taller than you are! It is blowing back and forth in the breeze—waves of golden grass. You touch some of it: it's stiff, and some pieces are sharp, but some pieces are soft and tickly. Some stems have little seeds growing at their tops. You see some of the grass rustle and you think you see a little animal dart through it.

You see beautiful wildflowers among the grass, and notice butterflies and bees dancing from one flower to another. You walk out into the tall grass to see more, but you realize that you could get lost, so you return to your family to begin to cross this sea of grass. Surely it will take days and days....

Could you picture that? Is it different now? Let's talk about grasses in our part of North America.

Grasses of the Grassland Prairie



Switch grass, Big Blue Stem (Turkey Feet) grass, Indian grass, and Little Blue Stem grass

* The grasslands area stretches over much of North America—from half-way up in Canada down to Northern Mexico, and lying between the Appalachian Mountains in the East, and the Rocky Mountain in the West. The TALL-GRASS PRAIRIE extended from Ohio to eastern Oklahoma, including where we live in Illinois and Iowa. [Look at our map; you can print it off and color in the whole grasslands area, and the tall grass prairie].

* Grass is an important part of our *ecosystem*. An *ecosystem* is part of the *environment* where all the plants and animals are connected to each other, and need each other to live. In the Unitarian Universalist religion this is called The Interdependent Web. Grass is important to many animals.

* Grass is important to many animals: for food....for a place to hide....to use to build homes....to hunt for food

Which of these animals need grass?



That's right; ALL of these animals need grass for one reason or another. Can you think of other animals that need grass? Why? And what about PEOPLE?

Do WE need grasses? Yes, we DO! Here are some reasons:

- Grasses keep dirt from blowing away
- Grasses are soft to walk on
- Grasses are FOOD. The seeds of many types of grasses are called grains, and we eat a lot of grains.

Do you eat Cheerios or Wheat Chex or Sugar Frosted Flakes? What grains are those cereals made of? (answers: oats, wheat, corn). Do you eat sandwiches? What grain is used most often in bread? (wheat). Do you eat rice with your Chinese dinner, or Rice Krispie Bars?



Oats, wheat, corn and rice

OK, so now we know that grasses are important to many creatures in our North America home. What happens if there aren't enough grasses? Look at each of these answers and see if you agree, and why:

- 1) animals won't have safe places to live
- 2) soil in our gardens and farmlands will blow away
- 3) we won't have enough food

Many people believe that we are stewards, or caretakers, of our Earth, and that we each need to help make sure it stays green and healthy. Do you believe that? What can you do to help?

Five EARTH-FRIENDLY Tips:



CAN YOU pick up trash from the grass when you see it?

CAN YOU make sure campfires are out?



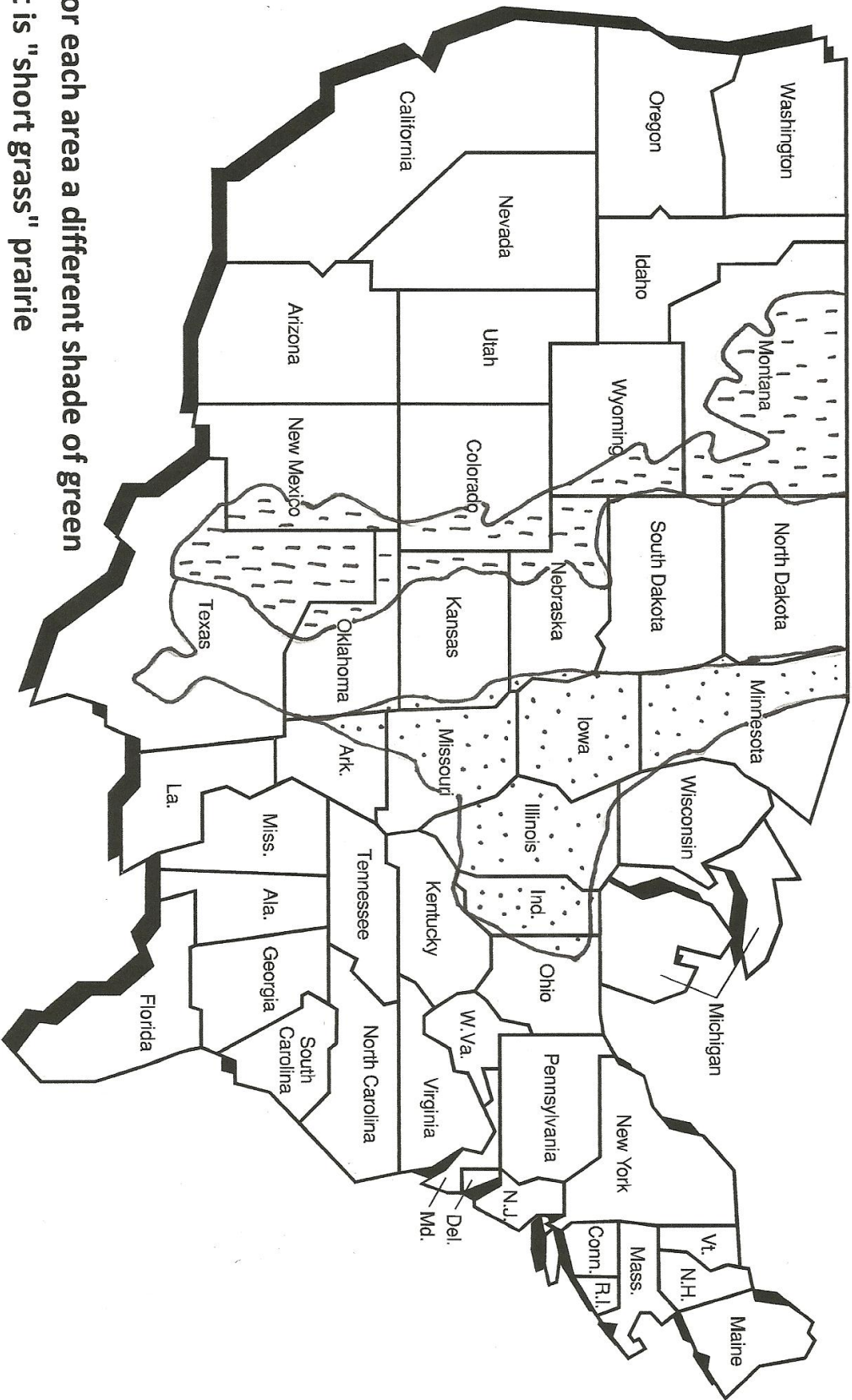
CAN YOU conserve (not waste) water ?

CAN YOU keep toxic materials like chemicals off grasses?

CAN YOU help with clean-up efforts in our area, like Clinton County [EnviroKids](#)?

WE ALL ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING TO KEEP OUR PLANET GREEN AND HEALTHY. THAT INCLUDES ALL OF EARTH'S GRASSES. WE EACH CAN DO OUR PART, TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN.

Grassland Coloring Page



Color each area a different shade of green

Left is "short grass" prairie

Middle is "mixed grass" prairie

Right is "tall grass" prairie

Websites for more Nature Conservancy sources:

Bison Homecoming: |

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/mexico/explore/bison-homecoming.xml>

Broken Kettle Grasslands Preserve: http://www.nature.org/media/iowa/ia_bkg_fs.pdf

[Grassland Animals | The Nature Conservancy](#)

<http://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/specialfeatures/animals/grassland-animals.xml>

ACTIVITIES:

Clinton County EnviroKids

This is a series of events for kids in 3rd to 5th grades, younger kids are welcome if accompanied by an adult. Clinton CCB partners with several other agencies on this award-winning program.

All events are 9 AM – Noon unless otherwise noted. To sign up, call Judie Petersen, at 563-357-6932. There is a one-time \$5 registration fee that covers all of the events.

September 10th: Hop aboard the Blue Heron pontoon boat at Rock Creek for a cruise and a beach clean-up. We will also be doing GPS geocaching and S'mores back at the park.

Clinton County Conservation newsletter The Heron website: <http://www.clintoncounty-ia.gov/SiteContent/Documents/File/Conservation/Newsletters/Summer%202011.pdf>

Places to see natural prairie:

Hess Cemetery, on the corner of 16th Street Northwest and 13th Avenue North, Clinton

Whittier School prairie, 1310 2nd Ave South, Clinton

Albany Mounds, South Cherry Street, Albany, IL

For Clinton Public Library hours and activities

<http://www.clinton.lib.ia.us/library-information>

Books related to grasses and grasslands available at Clinton Public Library:



World Book of Ecology: Life on the Plains, Catherine Bradley – J577.4 BRA

The Prairie, Charles Rotter – J574.5 ROT

Biomes of the World: Temperate Grasslands, Michael Allaby- J577 ALL

The Face of the Earth: Grasslands, Jenny Vaughan – J581.5 VAU

Why is the Grass Green?, Chris Avertis – J581.1 ARV