

**Spectacular
Animal Towns**

The Prairie Dog's Town

A Perfect
Hideaway



by Miriam Aronin

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A Perfect
Hideaway



by Miriam Aronin

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A Tremendous Town

In 1902, **biologist** Vernon Bailey traveled to Texas so that he could study the animals that lived there. In some areas, Vernon saw small furry creatures almost everywhere. They were “standing at the entrances to their holes, flipping their tails, and steadily barking.”



A prairie dog is not really a dog. It's a kind of squirrel. It got its name from the barking sounds it makes.

What were these small animals? They were black-tailed **prairie dogs**. The holes they stood next to led to underground homes called **burrows**. Vernon **estimated** that these burrows made up a huge town of about 400 million prairie dogs.

The prairie dog town that Vernon found covered 16 million acres (6.5 million hectares). That is bigger than the state of West Virginia. In fact, it is the largest prairie dog town ever discovered by humans!



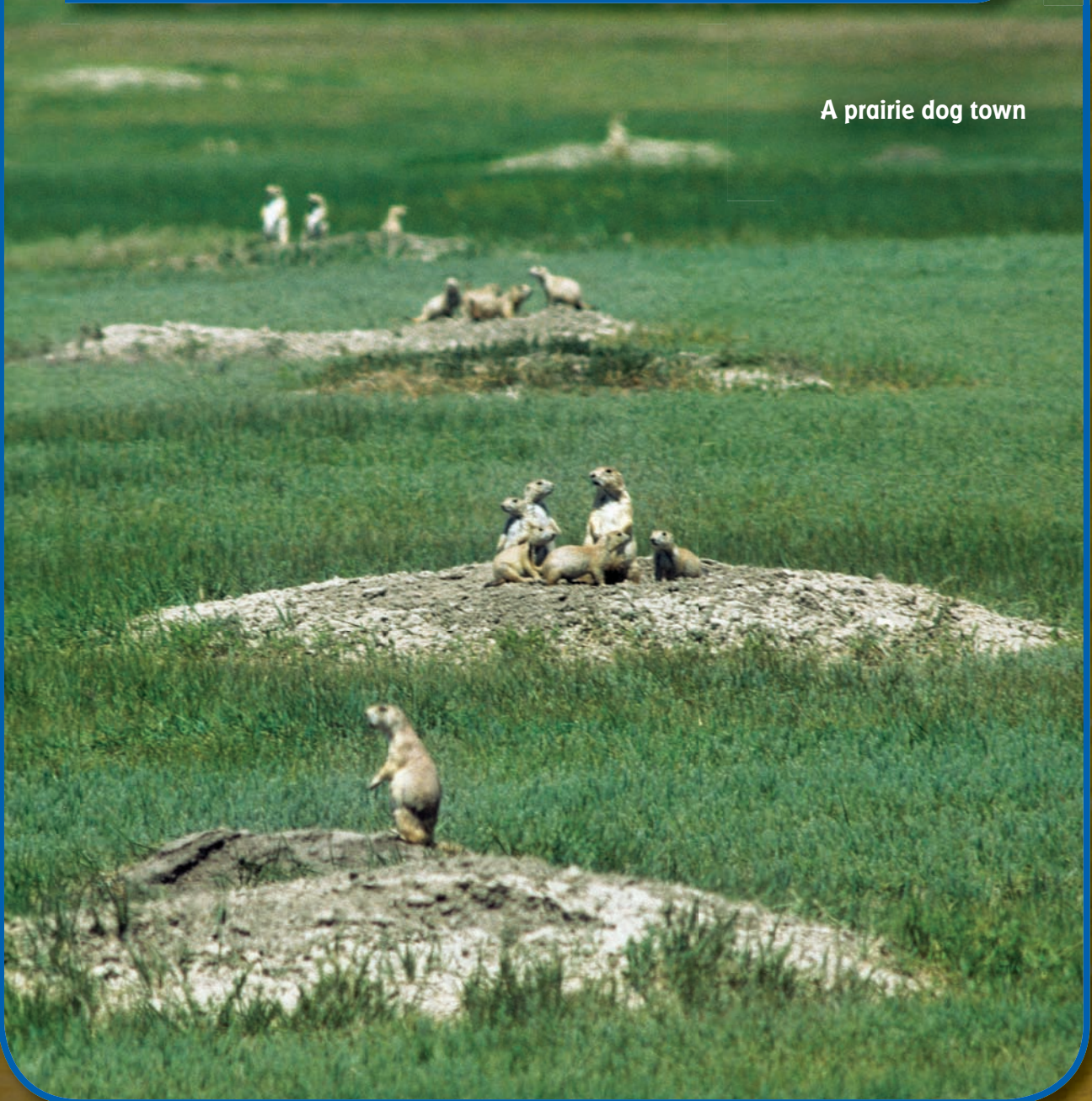
Prairie dogs live on grassy lands called prairies, which are mostly located in the west-central United States. They share the prairies with many other animals, such as bison.

Black-tailed prairie dogs are the most common **species** of prairie dog. The other types are the Mexican prairie dog, the Gunnison's prairie dog, the white-tailed prairie dog, and the Utah prairie dog.

Family Life in a Town

Today prairie dog towns are much smaller than the one that Vernon Bailey found. Towns usually cover less than 100 acres (40.5 hectares)—about the area of 75 football fields.

A prairie dog town



Prairie dog towns are similar to human towns because family members live together. However, prairie dog families, called **coteries**, are different than human families. Their families usually include one adult male, a few adult females, and their young. The members of each family work together to dig their burrows.



Each coterie has anywhere from 5 to as many as 35 family members.

A prairie dog town is made up of many families that may or may not be related. Each family, however, lives in its own home area or **territory**.

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About the Author

Miriam Aronin is a writer and editor. She enjoys reading, knitting, and visiting animals at the zoo.



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The Prairie Dog's Town

A Perfect Hideaway

In 1902, biologist Vernon Bailey traveled through Texas studying the animals that lived there. During his journey, he made an amazing discovery. He found a huge prairie dog town that was estimated to have about 400 million inhabitants. It was the largest prairie dog town ever discovered!

Look inside to enter the subterranean world of the prairie dog's town. You'll discover how these small furry animals communicate, find food, and raise their young. Perhaps most interesting of all, you'll find out how they work together to build their perfect hideaways under the ground.

The Ant's Nest

A Huge, Underground City

The Bat's Cave

A Dark City

The Beaver's Lodge

Building with Leftovers

The Coral Reef

A Giant City Under the Sea

The Honey Bee's Hive

A Thriving City

The Prairie Dog's Town

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