

Types of Ecosystem

these forests are highly adapted to their diverse environment having developed camouflage or strong defences.

Animal life in the Taiga forests consists mainly of birds, mammals and various rodents. They include woodpeckers, hawks, moose, bear, weasel, lynx, fox, wolf, deer, hares, chipmunks, shrews, and bats. Most of the animals in these forests are well-adapted to the cold climate and hibernate during the long winters.

Temperate forests have a thin canopy of trees which allows more light and heat to penetrate and permit the survival of smaller and cold-blooded animals like garter snakes, turtles and a few amphibians. Besides these, squirrels, rabbits, skunks, birds, deer, mountain lion, bobcat, timber wolf, fox, and black bear are found in these forests. Many species of temperate forests either hibernate or burrow in the ground to pass the winter months.

GRASSLAND ECOSYSTEM

Grasslands are found on every continent except Antarctica. These terrestrial ecosystems occupy roughly 19 per cent of the earth's surface. They are characterised by treeless herbaceous plant cover, dominated by a wide variety of grass species.

Features of Grassland Ecosystems

- ☐ Land is dominated by grasses. Large shrubs or trees are not there.
- ☐ Grasslands have rich variety of animals.
- ☐ Grasslands have been the home for grazing animals for million of years. Since the grass height is low and trees are few, animals found in their areas are exposed to the stress of sun and sweeping winds.

There are two main divisions of grasslands:

- Tropical grasslands or Savannas; and
- Temperate grasslands

Tropical grasslands are those close to the Equator. They are hot all year long. These grasslands cover almost half the surface of Africa and large areas of Australia, South America and India.

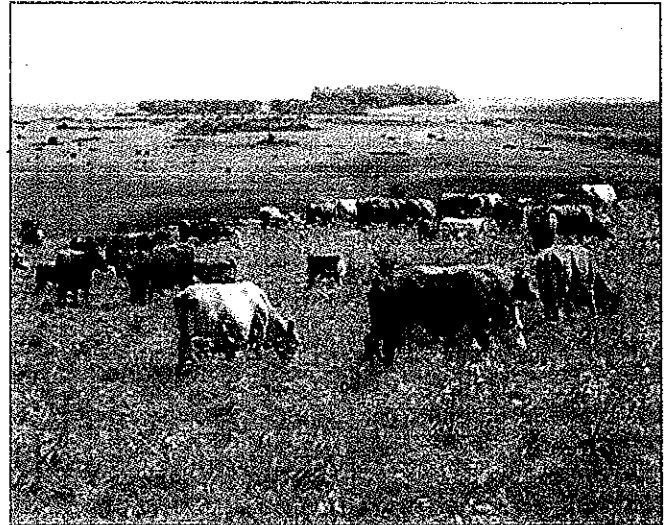


Fig. 1.2. Grassland Ecosystem

Temperate grasslands are those further from the Equator, with hot summers and harsh winters. The major Temperate grasslands are the *Veldts* of South Africa, the *Puszta* of Hungary, the *Pampas* of Argentina and Uruguay, the *Steppes* of the former Soviet Union, and the plains and *Prairies* of Central North America.

General Climate

Climate is the most important factor in creating a Savanna. Savannas are always found in warm or hot climates where the annual rainfall is from about 50.8 to 127 cm per year. The rainfall is concentrated in six or eight months of the year, followed by a long period of drought when fires can occur. Savanna has both a dry and a rainy season.

Temperate grasslands have hot summers and cold winters. Rainfall is moderate. Precipitation in the temperate grasslands usually occurs in the late spring and early summer. The temperature range is very large over the course of the year. Summer temperatures can be well over 38° C (100 degrees Fahrenheit), while winter temperatures can be as low as -40° C.

Flora

The main plants that grow on grasslands are grasses. There are thousands of different types of grasses. Grasses are plants that are found from the edge of the sea to high up in mountains, and in every continent except Antarctica. They are very successful plants because they survive the