Showdown

The Fight for Space



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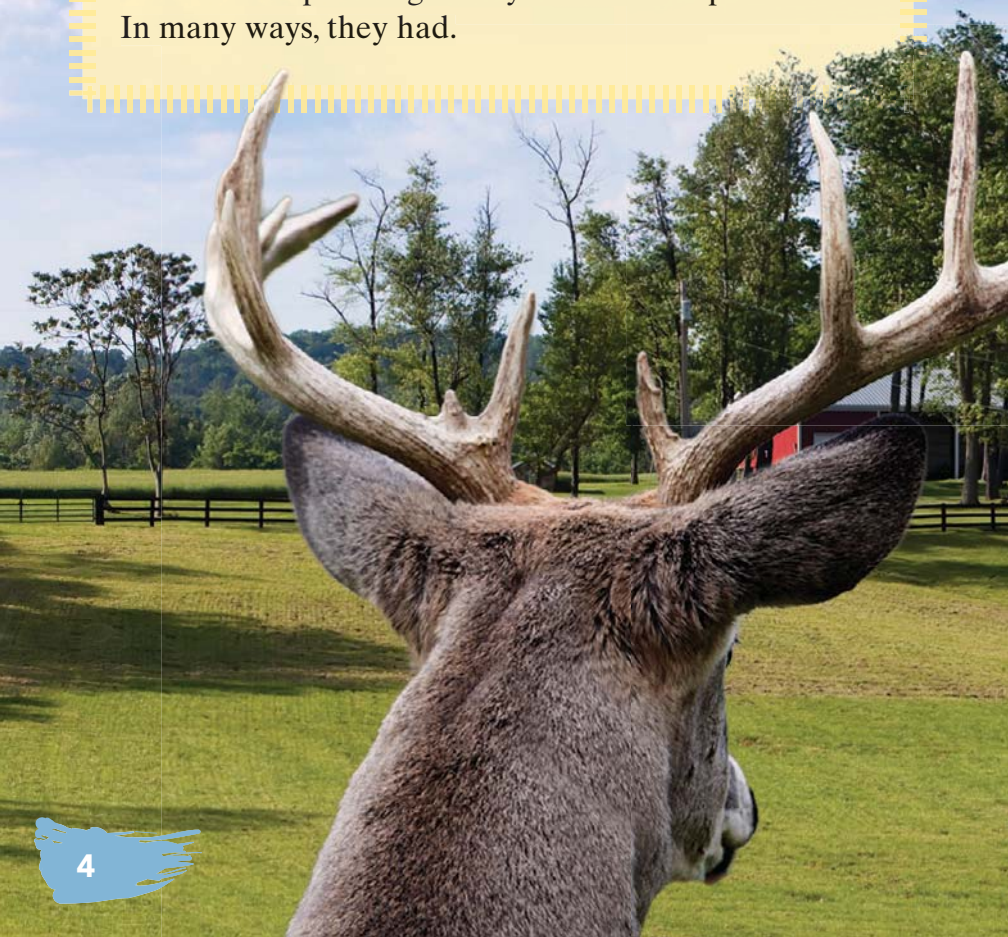
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There Once Was a Town

There once was a young town in the low, green hills of the West. People moved there from the big cities and areas already heavy with population. They wanted to live among the open hillsides and old farmlands. They liked the wild, natural spaces that still existed amid the new homes and businesses. The people who were not used to the natural world at their doorsteps thought they had found a paradise. In many ways, they had.





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THINK LINK

- What should humans understand about **ecosystems** before developing land for their use?
- Do humans have more rights to land and **resources** than *animals* do?
- Do humans have more rights to land and resources than *plants* do?

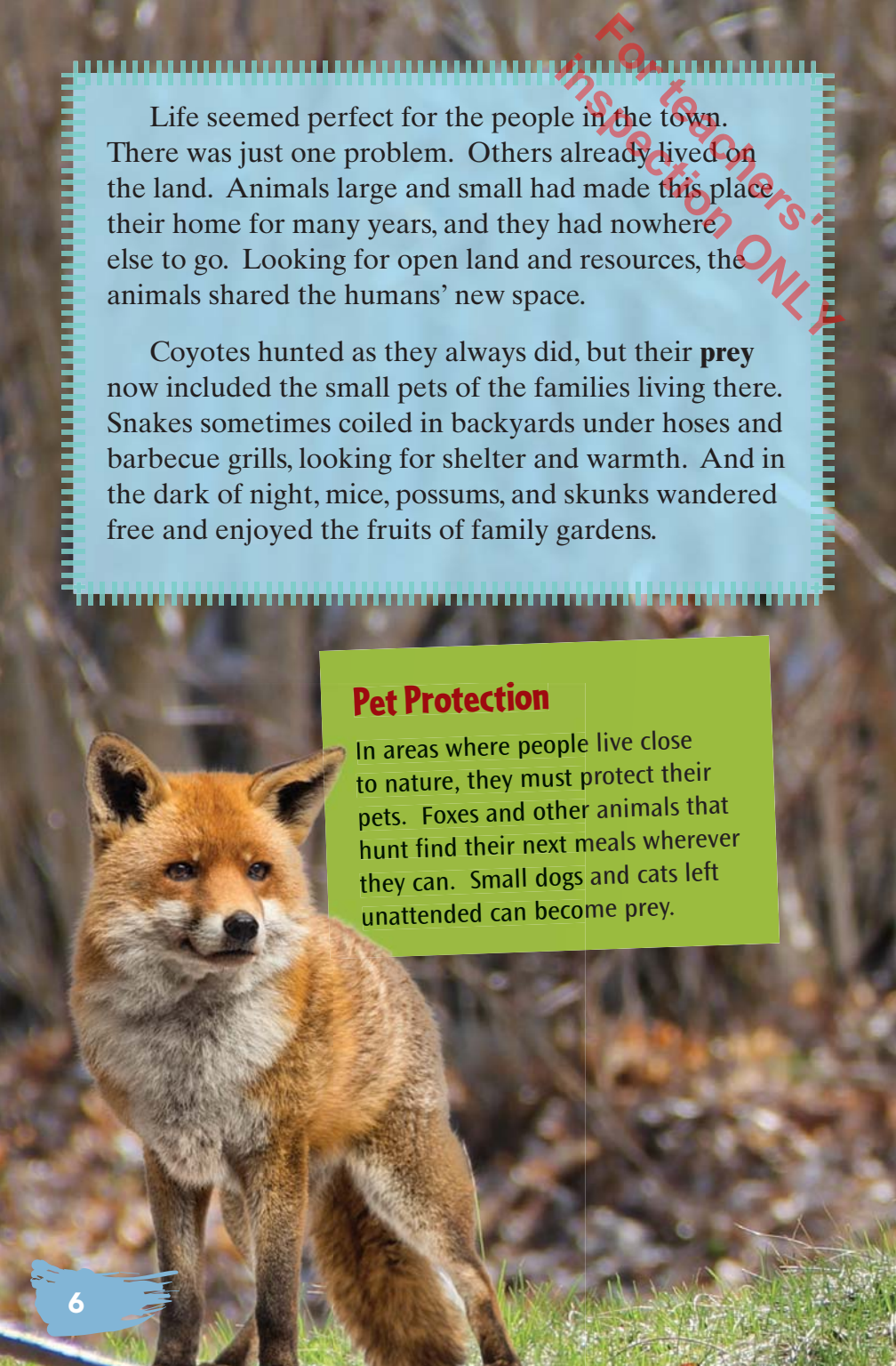
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Life seemed perfect for the people in the town. There was just one problem. Others already lived on the land. Animals large and small had made this place their home for many years, and they had nowhere else to go. Looking for open land and resources, the animals shared the humans' new space.

Coyotes hunted as they always did, but their **prey** now included the small pets of the families living there. Snakes sometimes coiled in backyards under hoses and barbecue grills, looking for shelter and warmth. And in the dark of night, mice, possums, and skunks wandered free and enjoyed the fruits of family gardens.

Pet Protection

In areas where people live close to nature, they must protect their pets. Foxes and other animals that hunt find their next meals wherever they can. Small dogs and cats left unattended can become prey.



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Spiders: Friends or Foes?

Living closely with nature means living with spiders—and that's a good thing! Spiders help maintain the population of insects. But some spiders are dangerous to humans. A harmful black widow might be found in a backyard wood stack as easily as a harmless jumping spider hiding behind curtains.



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Relationships Among Species

It is important to understand what happens when different species **vie** for the same resources. To do this, you must first understand the ways species interact. Every species is, at any given time, doing its best to survive. Each species lives by **instinct** and nature. These things work together to keep the species alive and healthy. The instinct to survive is strong.

Most species do not make a plan for living side by side with other species. Only humans can do that. Whether humans actually make a plan is another story.



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Growth and Changes

Growth and changes in a species is impacted most by changes in their environment. Changes in **habitat** and climate play a role, too. So do the ways in which species interact with each other. These changes can affect entire ecosystems.



Community

When two or more species interact in a given place, it is known as an *ecological community*. What one species does affects the other. Species in the same place do not exist apart from one another. Instead, they depend on each other to survive.

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Reader's Guide

1. What does a species' niche have to do with its role in an ecosystem?
2. How do humans compete with other species?
3. What can humans do to maintain balance in ecosystems when they, too, need resources?
4. Is competition among species always harmful? Explain your answer.

