Over in the Meadow



"OVER IN THE MEADOW, in the sand, in the sun… ." Have you ever heard that children's song? Maybe you have sung it yourself!

But what exactly is a meadow? A meadow is a wide-open habitat that plays an important role for ecosystems and wildlife, and meadows are found on every continent on Earth. Animals live and play in the grasses of meadows, and some meadows have trees. These open expanses exist without human cultivation or intervention.

What would you see if you visited a meadow?

Grasshoppers love meadows. Their bodies cool off in nighttime temperatures, and meadow mornings offer them the energy of the sun's rays and sips of dew as their exoskeletons warm up to start their days full of jumping 20 times their own length!

You can find spittlebugs in the meadow. Have you ever seen a plant that looks like it has a blob of spit on it? That blob is where a baby spittlebug lives. It hatches from its egg and sucks the sap from the stem of its host plant. The sap exits the spittlebug's body after it mixes with chemicals, and the tiny spittlebug lives inside the foamy blob it creates. In the middle of summer, the spittlebug becomes a froghopper bug and is ready to leave its spitty home.

If you visit a meadow, you might see milkweed plants that are loved by Monarch butterflies. The milk-like sap from milkweed plants is poisonous to almost all animals and insects, but not to Monarchs. Milkweed plants provide a safe home for Monarchs to lay their eggs, and their caterpillars, when they hatch, chow down on the milkweed leaves without having to be afraid of interference from predators. The milkweed's poison sap protects the caterpillars so they can grow up to be beautiful Monarch butterflies.

God created meadows on Earth so that his creation can flourish and be enjoyed within this unique ecosystem. God even uses the imagery of meadows to describe his people in the book of Isaiah: "They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams" (Is. 44:4).

There is something to see in meadows during every season God created. Visit one today to see what you can discover!



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Illustration for *The Banner* by Anita Barghigiani