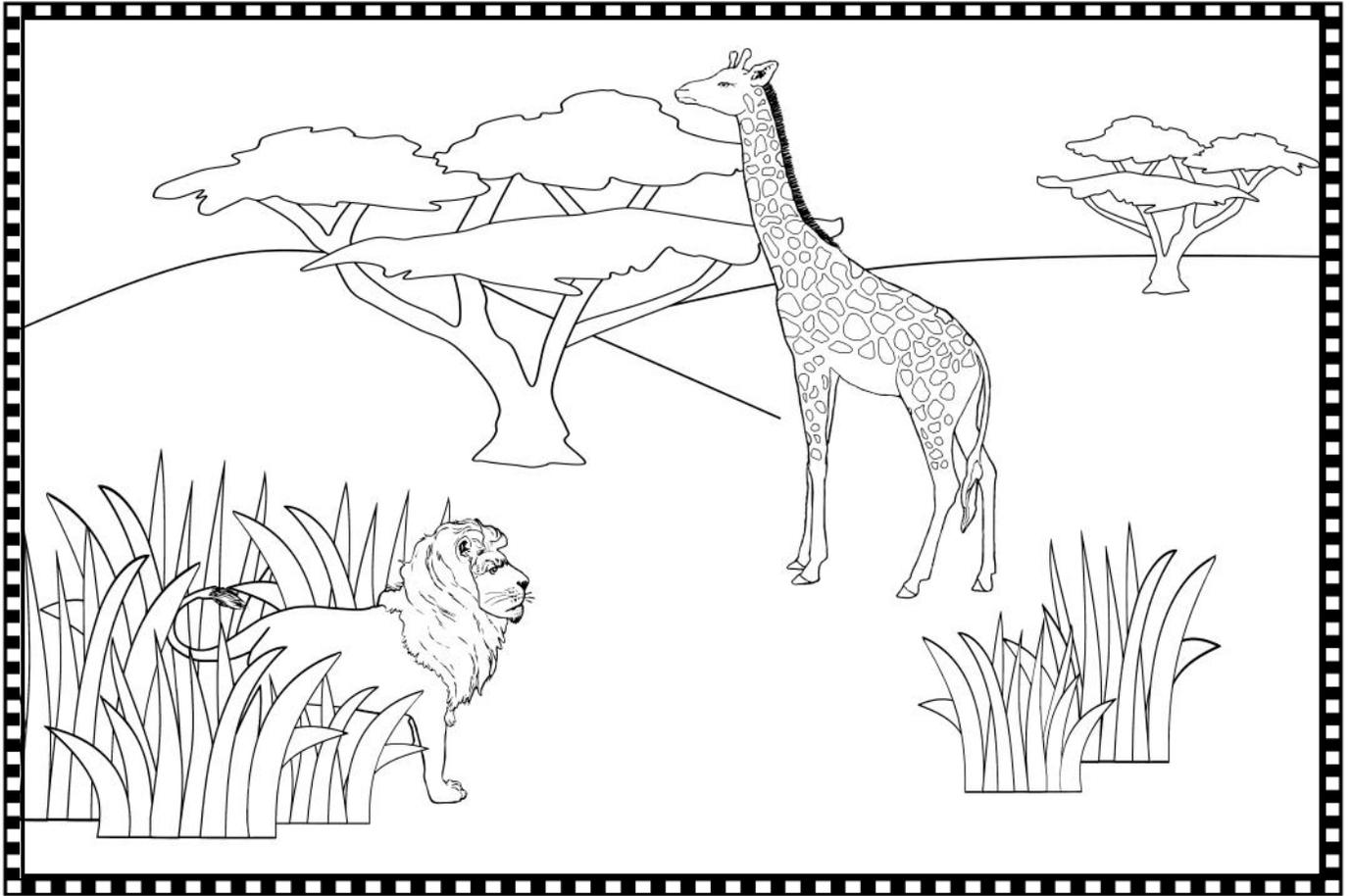


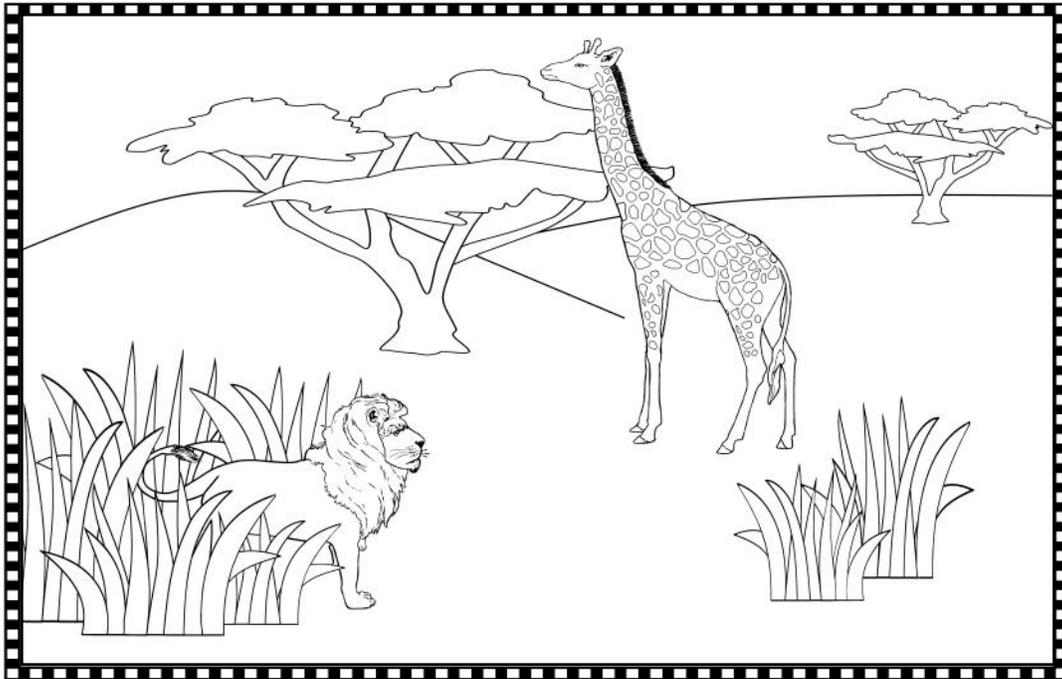
Savanna



A savanna is a big, grassy land where many kinds of animals live. The grass can be short or tall. Some savannas have trees. It is like a park for animals.

It is always warm in the savanna. It rains very hard for part of the year. The rest of the time it is really dry. Plants and animals have learned how to live whether it is wet or dry.

Savannas of the World



Do you like to go to the park? If so, you would probably love to visit a savanna. It's a little like a park for animals! It is a large, grassy plain or rolling hills, dotted with trees. It can go for miles. Africa has the largest savanna in the world. More kinds of mammals live on savannas than in any other type of biome, and there are LOTS of them! The temperature is always warm, and there are only two seasons—wet (summer) and dry (winter).

The two seasons are what make a savanna a savanna. The wet season lasts about 6-8 months. It starts in May, and rains almost every day. Ten to thirty inches of rain may fall each year. The rivers and watering holes fill up, plants leaf out and grow, and birds arrive. Herbivores feed on the grass, shrubs, and trees, and carnivores feed on them.

The rest of the year the weather is dry. The water dries up, plants go dormant, birds leave. Lightning often hits the ground during the dry winter, and starts fires that sweep quickly through the grasslands. The fires clean things up. The dry season is hard for the animals of the savanna, but they have learned how to live during both times of the year.

There are different kinds of savannas. Some have short grass, and some have tall grass. Some have a few trees, and some have many trees. Meerkats live in short grass savannas so they can see predators easily. Lions live in tall grass savannas so they can hide as they stalk their prey. Giraffes live in acacia savannas because the acacia tree is their favorite food. Every plant and animal on the savanna is custom made for its place in the biome.

Savannas of the World



The wide, sweeping grasslands of the world's savannas cover about 10%-20% of the land surface on earth. They are the youngest biome to develop and contain the highest concentration of mammals found anywhere on earth. Located between tropical rainforests and deserts, you will find large, rolling, grassy ranges with scattered trees and shrubs. There is not enough rainfall on the savanna to support a forest, but more rainfall than found in the dry, arid deserts.

There are two seasons in the savanna—the long, dry season in winter, and the wet, rainy season in summer. During the dry season, little or no rain falls. The rivers and watering holes dry up, the plants drop their leaves, and the grass withers. Food becomes hard to find. Lightning may hit the ground causing fires. The dry season usually lasts from six to eight months and is the reason why the savanna doesn't turn into a forest.

In the summer, beginning in May, there is a lot of rain—10-30 inches (25-75 cm) may fall during this wet season which is 6-8 months long. The air, warmed by the sun and the land, rises up to meet the cooler air of the sky and creates rain. It rains nearly everyday, sometimes for hours at a time. This heavy rain can result in floods and erosion. The temperature is warm year round, usually ranging from 65-85 degrees (20-30 C).

There are several different types of savannas. The most famous is the Serengeti Plains in Tanzania. These open grasslands are dotted with umbrella shaped acacia trees. Open wooded areas create another type of savanna. The trees provide good coverage for animals, but they are far enough apart so the sun can reach the woodland floor and allow grass to grow. Some savannas have short grass, and some have tall grass. Different animals live in the different types of savannas. Meerkats live in short grass areas so they can see predators from a long distance. Lions live in tall grass savannas so they can hide in the grass as they stalk their prey. Giraffes live in acacia savannas because the acacia tree is their favorite food. Each plant and animal is custom made for their niche in the grassy plain!