

National Trails

Color the Trails

These so-called dogs are not dogs at all – they’re squirrels! Ground squirrels, to be exact. They do not climb trees and eat acorns. Instead, they dig burrows in the earth and eat roots, seeds, and grass. Prairie dogs love to be with friends and family, so they live together in big “prairie dog towns” that can cover many acres, even miles of land. Pioneers on the wagon trails enjoyed watching these little animals frolic and play together, and often wrote about them in their diaries.

Prairie dogs watched the pioneers, too. They like to stand guard on the mounds of dirt at the entrance to their burrows, keeping an eye out for danger. Some people called them “barking squirrels” because when the guard spots a hawk, rattlesnake, coyote, or person approaching, he makes a loud barking sound to warn all his friends to take cover.



PRAIRIE DOG

NPS/Cheyne Warren