



Cody's Cabin: Life in a Pine Forest

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In the forested mountains of Wyoming sits a small, log house. The little cabin has large, welcoming windows that look out at the lodgepole pine and aspen trees around it. The log cabin is not too big and not too small – just the right size in which an older dog and his people can live for a few days.

Every weekend in the summer, a brown Cocker Spaniel named Cody travels with his human family to the cabin from their home many miles away. Cody likes sitting in the back seat of the car as it moves down the highway. But, he enjoys sitting at the cabin's big picture window even more! From his special spot near the porch, Cody looks outside at the many trees and creatures living in the forest.



He sees **mammals**, insects, and birds, and he often hears and smells them as well. Mule deer, pine squirrels, red foxes, butterflies and sometimes even a dragonfly spend time near Cody's cabin. Many types of songbirds live in the forest as well. Tiny gray juncos dart from the pine branches down to the forest floor, looking for insects and seeds to eat. Robins sing happily from aspen limbs while mountain chickadees chorus wing by. Hummingbirds zip from yellow sunflowers to white daisies, drinking the sweet **nectar** through their long bills.



Cody sometimes watches the birds and other animals from his green wicker chair near the living room's large window. Pine squirrels munch on pinecones as they sit on the edge of the tree branches. Their smaller cousins, the chipmunks, scurry across logs that fell in the forest long ago. Red foxes yip on nearby hillsides, and mule deer graze on the green grass that sprouts each summer. And, sometimes, a few feathery turkeys strut through the woodland looking for new feeding and roosting areas.

LEARN A NEW WORD:

Mammals are a group of animals with vertebrae (backbone) that are born alive and whose mothers feed their young with milk-producing glands called mammary glands.

Nectar is the sweet liquid found in flowers that is eaten by, insects such as butterflies, and birds such as hummingbirds; it is also used by bees to make honey.

Each morning Cody and his family walk the dirt trail near their cabin. Cody notices animal tracks and animal smells. Each creature has its own special scent, and Cody's spaniel nose catches a whiff. He sniffs the plants, such as dark green sagebrush, the white bark of aspen trees, and the many colorful wildflowers, tracking all smells with his best tracker... his nose!

Cocker spaniels once served kings of England, helping to hunt wild birds that the people would eat. Spaniels today are sometimes still used to help the human hunter find his wild bird, such as quail and pheasant. Whether a hunter or a house pet, a spaniel's nose works very well to follow different scents.



DID YOU KNOW....?

Cocker spaniels come from England. The English Cocker Spaniel was used for the purpose of hunting as far back as the 13th century. The American Cocker Spaniel developed from its English cousin. According to the American Kennel Club (AKC), cocker spaniels are very popular as family pets.

Deer are one the most abundant wild mammals in America. The mule deer is found in the western U.S. and is known for its large ears and black-tipped tail. The white-tail deer lives in many U.S. states, prefers lower elevations near streams and other waterways, and is noted for its white flag-like tail.

Western meadowlarks are about the size of robins with a bright yellow belly featuring a black "V". The western meadowlark is the state bird of Wyoming, Montana and a few other states. Every state has a designated state bird -- what is your state's special bird?

Insects, like bees and butterflies, and birds, such as hummingbirds, help pollinate flowers and shrubs. However, the population of bees and butterflies is decreasing because of habitat loss and other factors. You can help bees, butterflies and hummingbirds by planting colorful flowers at your house. Learn how by visiting <http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx>.

When Cody walks with his human family, he discovers many small creatures living among the green grasses and colorful wildflowers. Tiny red ants walk through the tall grass. Yellow and black swallowtail butterflies flutter among the purple lupine in the mountain meadow. Other wildflowers, such as violet-colored aster, red columbine, and orange Indian paintbrush welcome bees and other **pollinators** to their summer home. Small blue butterflies drink the morning dew from rocks and grass stems, adding to the quiet beauty of the summer day.



Cody and his people take short breaks during their walk. As his humans sit on logs or rocks and enjoy the morning stillness and the mountain scenery around them, Cody sits on his back legs and looks around. The first light of day welcomes many types of wildlife, such as chipmunks and mule deer. Songbirds sing happily, as if greeting the morning. Black and white mountain chickadees trill from towering pine trees while meadowlarks sway on tall grass stalks.

This particular walk morning as Cody and his people take their rest, several black and yellow bumblebees, two dazzling dark blue dragonflies, and numerous yellow and brown butterflies dart around the meadow. They pause among the numerous yellow, purple, red and blue wildflowers. Cody watches the flutter of wings around him. He cocks his head from side to side as the winged creatures fly above and around his head. As he watches, Cody also listens and sniffs. A dog can learn much through his different senses!

LEARN A NEW WORD:

Pollinators are animals, mostly insects, that transfer pollen in flowers to other parts of the plants.

The warming sunlight also brings out larger animals. Cody watches a mule deer mom and her two spotted fawns nibble grass growing in the open areas of the forest. They graze quietly, unaware of the dog and his human family nearby. Suddenly the deer's large ears stand up, and the mother's head snaps in attention. She keeps her eyes focused on a pine tree, and a moment later, a red fox walks out from behind the tree. The fox sits near a mound of dirt. Cody stands quickly. His human family sees the fox as well, and they watch as the silky-furred creature cocks its head so that its ear is just a few inches above the dirt pile. The fox listens intently, waiting for the right moment to pounce on a daydreaming mouse hidden beneath the earth. The fox arches its body then swiftly and silently leaps, landing on the mound in the attempt to claim a mouse meal.

Foxes are **carnivores** and eat other small animals to survive. Being a dog, Cody is also a carnivore, but he doesn't have to hunt other animals for his food – his humans give him crunchy kibble from a bag. As Cody watches his red fox cousin pounce on the mouse and miss, he's thankful his lunch comes from a bag at the grocery store!

Cody and his human family resume their morning stroll. A meadowlark greets them with its welcoming warble. This brightly colored bird with a black "V" on its chest is a summer visitor to the area, just like Cody and his people. The meadowlark's twittering breaks the silence of the morning, but the sound is pleasing, and Cody and his family stop a moment to listen. When they do, they also see dashes of blue dart in front of them as mountain bluebirds collect insects to eat.

DID YOU KNOW...?

There are several types of **foxes** in the United States. The red fox is the most numerous and is found throughout the U.S. The swift fox and the kit fox are closely related and live in more desert areas. The gray fox can climb trees. Red foxes catch mice and other small animals by listening closely at dirt burrows, leaping in an arching fashion and pouncing quickly.

LEARN A NEW WORD:

Carnivores are animals that eat other animals for food.

