Lewis & Clark in Montana

THE MISSION: In the spring of 1803, President Thomas Jefferson assigns his personal secretary Meriwether Lewis to begin planning for exploration of the Louisiana Territory and western lands beyond. Lewis invites his former army comrade William Clark to share command of the expedition.

On May 14, 1804, the Corps of Discovery begins its expedition with instructions from President Jefferson to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean (the "Northwest Passage"). Along they way, they are instructed to observe and document new plants and animals, and to make contact with Indian tribes that inhabit the land, befriending them if possible.

THE DISCOVERIES: Lewis, Clark and other members of the Corps kept journals and diaries of their expedition. They recorded their travel plans and weather conditions, made maps, documented the landscapes they passed through, and described plants and animals they saw in scientific detail. The expedition documented many Indian tribes, including the Assiniboin, Crow, Blackfeet, and Shoshone.

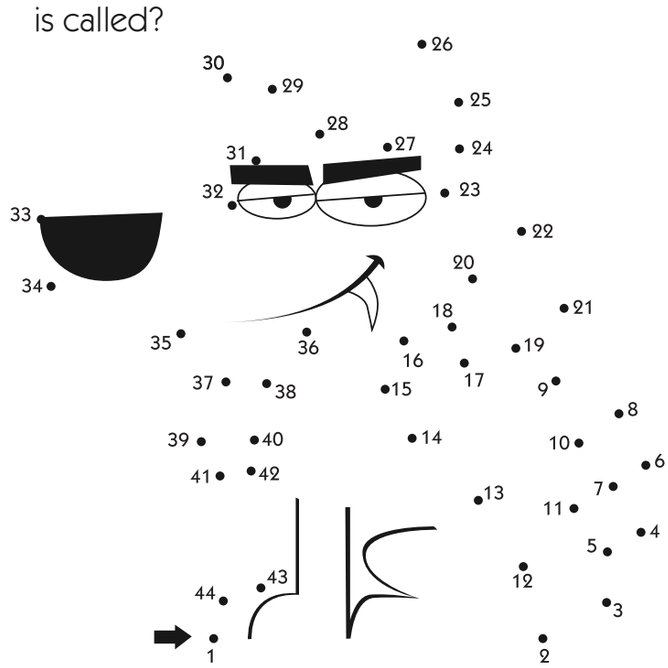
Yellowstone cutthroat trout

Their journals included the first descriptions of the huckleberry, bitterroot flower, lodgepole pine, prickly-pear cactus, cutthroat trout, channel catfish, Lewis' woodpecker, Stellar's jay, coyote, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, and many others.

What animal did you discover?

Connect the dots to find out!

Lewis and Clark first described this animal in 1804. They called them "prairie wolves." Typically gray or orange-gray with a lighter underside, this bushy-tailed animal can be found throughout the western United States. Do you know what this animal is called?



GRIZZLY BEARS! Lewis and Clark had never seen grizzly bears until they entered Montana on April 29, 1805. They called them white bears, and saw many during their travels. One bear chased Lewis into a river. Another bear chased one of the men up a tree. They saw bears all across Montana's prairie in places known today as Miles City, Wolf Point, and Fort Benton. Grizzly bears are now found only in the Rocky Mountains. The grizzly was considered to possess great spiritual power among Indian culture, and was often painted as an artistic symbol and carved on tools.

Bear pictograph

Experience the Lewis & Clark expedition at Montana's state parks!

GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK: *June 18, 1805* Clark wrote "proceeded on up the river a little more than a mile to the largest fountain or Spring I ever Saw, and doubt if it is not the largest in America Known"

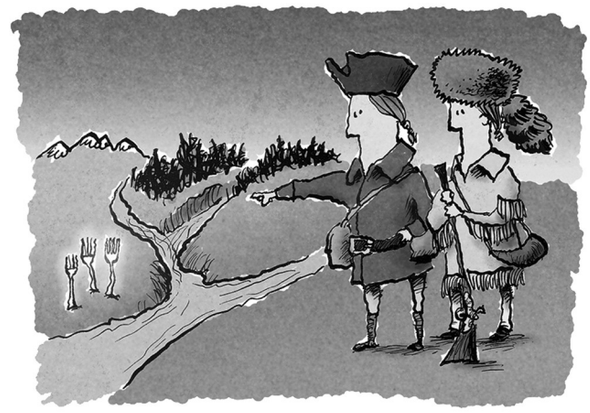
TOWER ROCK STATE PARK: *July 16, 1805* Meriwether Lewis noted in his journal "at this place there is a large rock of 400 feet high…This rock I called the Tower."

MISSOURI HEADWATERS STATE PARK: *July 27, 1805* Meriwether Lewis wrote "we called the S. W. fork, that which we meant to ascend, Jefferson's River in honor of Thomas Jefferson. The Middle fork we called Madison's River in honor of James Madison, and the S. E. Fork we called Gallitin's River in honor of Albert Gallitin."

BEAVERHEAD ROCK STATE PARK: *August 10, 1805* Clark wrote "we proceeded on passed a remarkable Clift point on the Stard. Side about 150 feet high, this Clift the Indians Call the Beavers head"

CLARK'S LOOKOUT STATE PARK: *August 13, 1805* Clark climbed a rock outcropping to take compass readings he wrote "From the top of this rock the—Point of the Beaver head hill bears N. 24° E 12 ms. The Course of the Wisdom river is—N. 25° W. The gap at the place the river passes thro' a mountain in advance is— S. 18° W. 10 ms.

TRAVELERS' REST STATE PARK: *September 9, 1805* Lewis wrote "as our guide informes that we should leave the river at this place and the weather appearing settled and fair I determined to halt the next day rest our horses and take some scelestial Observations. We called this Creek Travellers rest."



YOUR VERY OWN JOURNAL OF DISCOVERY!

Think about an animal you saw today. How would you describe it to someone who has never seen it?

_____

_____

_____

If you discovered a river today, what would you name it? Why did you choose this name?

_____

_____

What did you notice about the landscape you saw today? What kind of plants and animals do you think live here?

_____

_____

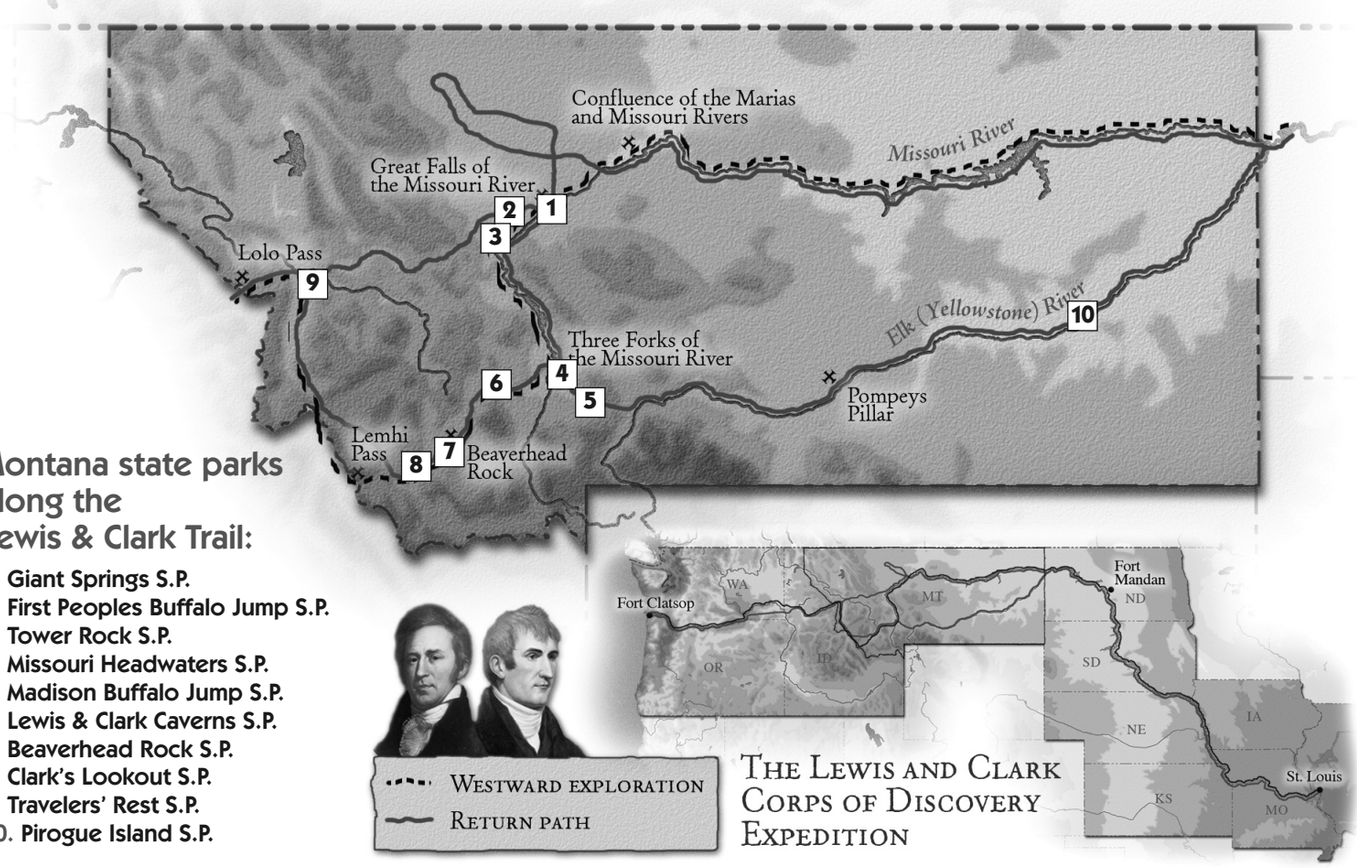
_____

_____

Lewis and Clark used five different types of boats on their journey. Some were carved out of trees! Sometimes their boats would tip and spill out people and gear, but no one drowned. What things make boats safer today?

_____

_____



Montana state parks along the Lewis & Clark Trail:

1. Giant Springs S.P.
2. First Peoples Buffalo Jump S.P.
3. Tower Rock S.P.
4. Missouri Headwaters S.P.
5. Madison Buffalo Jump S.P.
6. Lewis & Clark Caverns S.P.
7. Beaverhead Rock S.P.
8. Clark's Lookout S.P.
9. Travelers' Rest S.P.
10. Pirogue Island S.P.