

EXPLORE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM. LEARN INSIDE OUR STATE.

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### **Extra Credit Activity**

#### **Ecosystem Explorer: Grasslands Ecosystems**

#### **Comanche National Grassland**

**Activity:** Learn about the ecosystems and wildlife found in Comanche National Grassland.

**Background Information:** According to the Forest Service, the Comanche National Grassland has approximately 275 different species of birds and the longest dinosaur track-way in the world.

**Word Alert: Ecosystem:** An ecosystem is a geographic area where plants, animals, and other organisms, as well as weather and landscapes, work together to form a bubble of life.

#### **Questions to Ask:**

1. *Would you like to live here? Why or why not? (Answers will vary)*
2. *The Comanche National Grassland is home to two ecosystems – short grass prairie and canyonland. How do you think these types of ecosystems would be different? (Short grass prairie habitat is flat to rolling terrain dominated by short grasses that form a nearly continuous carpet across the landscape. The grasses can withstand the harsh climate better than any other plants and help to protect the essential topsoil. Without the grasses, there would be no plant or animal life, just dust. The canyon areas host pinyon pines, junipers and cacti in rougher terrain.)*
3. *What kinds of animals might you see on the Comanche National Grassland? (horses, cows, prairie dogs, rattlesnakes, elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, foxes, tarantulas and frogs)*
4. *What colors are the birds you see? Why might they be that color? What does "camouflage" mean? (Answers will vary)*

5. *What kinds of birds might you see on the Comanche National Grassland? (Lesser Prairie Chicken, Mountain Plover, Long-Billed Curlew, Burrowing Owls, Scaled Quail, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Whooping Crane, Northern Harrier, American Bald Eagle, prairie raptors, Loggerhead Shrike, grasshopper sparrow, woodpeckers, thrushes, falcons, jays, dove, turkeys, hawks and bluebirds). Some of these birds live on the ground, some in trees, some in bushes, and some near water.*