

# Fort Pierre National Grassland

**JUNIOR RANGER  
ACTIVITY BOOK**



This book belongs to:

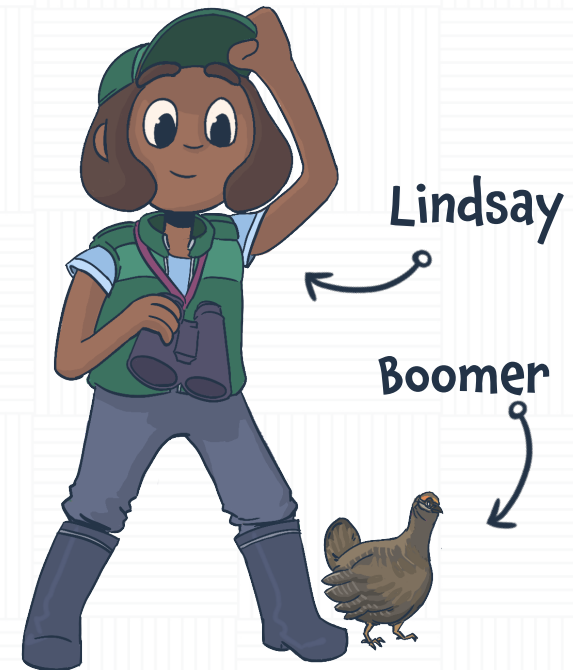
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**Fort Pierre Ranger District**  
**Fort Pierre National Grassland**  
1020 North Deadwood Street  
Fort Pierre, SD 57532  
(605) 224-5517



# WELCOME TO FORT PIERRE!



**My name's Lindsay, and my friend Boomer here  
is a Greater Prairie-Chicken!**

We're here to show you around and help you become a Fort Pierre National Grassland Junior Ranger. All you'll need is your field notebook (*that's this!*), a good pair of shoes, and a little imagination!

Do your best to complete **all the activities** in this book. When you're finished, bring it to the Fort Pierre front desk so a ranger can sign your certificate. Then you are officially a Fort Pierre Junior Ranger!

**Come on, let's get started!**



# Lots of animals call Fort Pierre National Grassland their home!

Unscramble these animal names.

## EPIRAR OGD

They live in burrows underground.

## NGRNPROOH

They are the fastest land mammal in North America.

## ACFTIHS

Whiskers allow them to hunt in dark and murky places.

## EGTRAER IAPRRIE ICEKNCH

Males inflate the orange sacs on their necks in order to attract females.

## ASHDRPAILET ROUGSE

The males gather on a group breeding ground called a lek and show off for the females.

## ENRTAKETLSA

They make a unique noise as a warning before they strike.

## RGLEA MTHUO ASBS

Males have the duty of guarding the eggs.

## GUOIWRBRN LOW

They nest underground, in prairie dog burrows.



# Home Sweet Habitat

A habitat is the home of an animal or plant. Like your home, an animal's home gives them food, water, and a place to sleep. From deserts to freezing tundra, almost every place on Earth is a habitat. Fort Pierre is a mixed-grass prairie habitat and provides for lots of animals to live here.

Animals living in a mixed-grass prairie may eat grasses, bugs, or other animals. They could get water from rivers or wetlands and may sleep in burrows or trees.

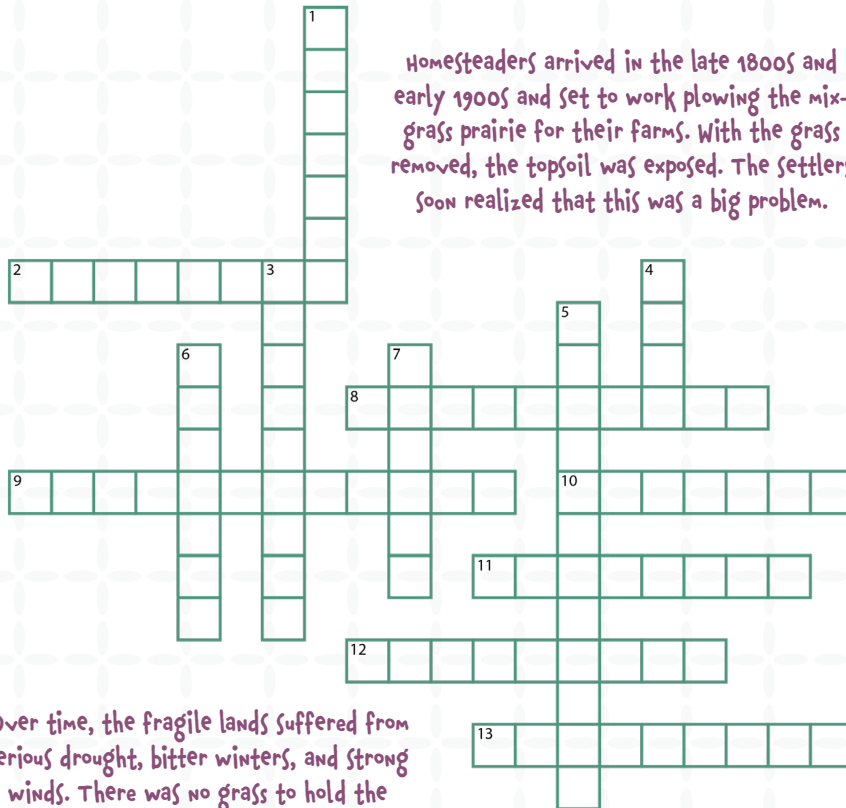
What is your favorite mixed-grass prairie animal?

Write down or draw what you think makes up their habitat.

What animal did you pick?	What do they eat?
How do they get water?	Where do they sleep?

# Protecting the prairie habitat of animals and plants is very important!

Can you figure out the answers to the clues?



Homesteaders arrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s and set to work plowing the mix-grass prairie for their farms. With the grass removed, the topsoil was exposed. The settlers soon realized that this was a big problem.

Over time, the fragile lands suffered from serious drought, bitter winters, and strong winds. There was no grass to hold the topsoil in place so it blew away. Conservation practices and emergency relief efforts of the 1930s worked to restore the damaged lands.

Today, the USDA Forest Service cares for the Fort Pierre National Grassland for the benefit of the people.

## Word Bank

Ecosystem   Extinct   Fire   Habitat  
Poaching   Pollution   Native   Preservation  
Grazing   Biodiversity   nutrients   Invasive  
management

## Across

2. The illegal hunting, killing or capturing of animals
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is important in the restoration of grasslands and forests that are damaged or destroyed.
9. A word used to describe the variety of life on Earth. Habitat conservation is important in maintaining this.
10. Means gone forever
11. \_\_\_\_\_ species were brought to an ecosystem and can hurt the plants and animals already living there.
12. Can cause damage by making an environment too toxic for plants and animals.
13. Made up of all of the living and nonliving things in an area. The plants and animals of an \_\_\_\_\_ depend on each other for survival.

## Down

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a grassland management technique that allows livestock to eat a certain amount and type of grass. This stimulates new plants to grow and keeps the prairie healthy.
3. They exist in soil and are essential for a plant to grow. Erosion and overfarming may decrease the amount of these in the ground.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a prairie's way of starting over, removing built up decaying grasses and putting their nutrients back into the soil. This can either happen naturally from lightning or intentionally by the US Forest Service to manage the grasslands' health.
5. The protection of things found in nature.
6. Loss of a species' home, or its \_\_\_\_\_, is the biggest threat to its survival.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ species occur naturally in an area.



Combat habitat loss by planting native plants, keeping motorized vehicles on designated roads, and remembering to practice "leave no trace" techniques.





# Try out some bird watching!

Whether they call Fort Pierre home or are just travelling through on their migration routes, lots of birds can be found in the Fort Pierre National Grassland.

This makes Fort Pierre a treasured destination for bird watchers. Can you find any of these birds? Use the pictures as a guide for your own bird watching adventure!

Circle the birds you find!



**Western  
Meadowlark**

These birds have a flute-like, warbled song. This unique, watery call differentiates it from the eastern meadowlark.



**Lark Bunting**

The male lark bunting is the only sparrow that changes from black and white feathers during their breeding season, to a grayish brown in the winter.



**Brown-headed  
Cowbird**

Female brown-headed cowbirds lay their eggs in the nests of other small birds. The hatchling is then fed by the host parents.



**Burrowing  
Owl**

Unlike most owls that are mainly active at night, the burrowing owl is active both during the day and at night.



**Great Blue Heron**

The Great Blue Heron is the largest and most widespread heron in North America. They have a 6-foot wingspan when flying.



**Grasshopper  
Sparrow**

The grasshopper sparrow takes its name not only from its diet, but also from its insect-like song.



**Red-winged  
blackbird**

Red-winged blackbirds may travel as far as 50 miles between roosting and feeding sites.



## Flying Over the Great Plains

The Central Flyway is a major bird migration route. It generally follows the Great Plains of the United States and Canada. Many of the birds traveling along this route use the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and the American prairie as navigational guides.

Approximately 400 bird species use the Central Flyway. The flyway provides plenty of food, water, and cover for the travelling birds.

## Humans migrated across the grasslands too!

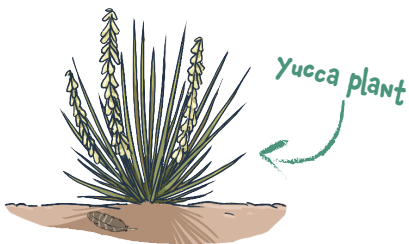
The famous expedition by Lewis and Clark included a route through these grasslands. Early settlers of the Great Plains also traveled through on their way west.

This area is the homeland of the Lakota who migrated west to follow the buffalo that sustained their lifestyle.



## Did you spot any cool plants?

Draw a picture below.



Boomer lost some of his feathers on his adventures in Fort Pierre! Can you help him find them by circling all 5 feathers in this book?



Did Boomer get a new look? Nope. He's just looking for a mate! Male greater prairie chickens, like Boomer, perform a unique mating dance where they stomp their feet and lift the feathers on the side of their necks to expose orange sacks underneath. They then inflate the sacks to create a booming sound. Female greater prairie chickens can't resist!

Due to the loss of its habitat, the greater-prairie chicken population nearly went extinct. Steps were taken to protect their habitat and the population has stabilized. However, the greater-prairie chicken is still at risk and preservation of its grassland habitat is important to the species' survival.

## Wow, that was a lot of hard work!

Now that you've finished, bring this booklet to the Fort Pierre front desk during regular hours and a ranger will sign your certificate.





# Certificate of Achievement



awarded to

for successful completion of all of the required activities to be a  
**Fort Pierre National Grassland Junior Ranger**

Ranger Signature

Date



way to go!

