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Fungi, bacteria and invertebrates play an important role in ecosystems by breaking down dead and decaying matter and filtering the nutrients back into the soil. What are some ways that these organisms directly benefit other prairie animals?

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Running at 53 miles per hour, the pronghorn of Black Mesa's short grass prairie is the second fastest land animal in the world. Why did pronghorns adapt the ability to run at such high speeds?

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Find the information on wasps vs. spiders. Describe the evolutionary contest between tarantula hawks and tarantulas.

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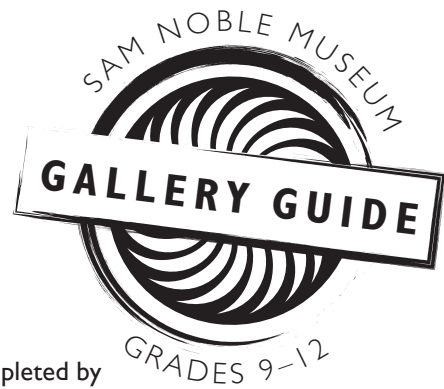
Prairie dogs are a **keystone species**, meaning that they are vital to the environment in which they live. List four ways that prairie dogs are beneficial to the short grass prairie.

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# HALL OF NATURAL WONDERS



Welcome to the Sam Noble Museum!

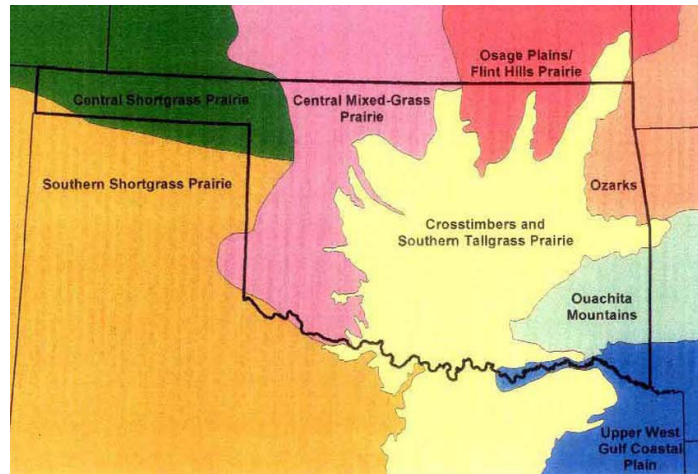
These gallery activities are designed to be completed by a student or group of students.

Gallery Guides are available for each of the museum's three permanent galleries.

The Hall of Natural Wonders is your guide to the plants and animals of Oklahoma. Each section of this gallery features different ecosystems in the state including woodlands, caves, mixed grass prairie and short grass prairie. Each of these areas are home to different plants and animals.

In the Ozark Highlands, you will explore the diversity of life in the upland stream and discover the different species that live in the oak hickory forest. Then, head to the limestone cave which features the 22 species of bat that live in Oklahoma. Next, find the bison in the mixed grass prairie and learn about how these giant animals have adapted to life on the prairie. Finally, stop by the short grass prairie to learn about Black Mesa and the wildlife that live in the driest part of our state.

Use the map below to learn where in the state each ecosystem is found!





1. Begin at the Hall of Natural Wonders located on the second floor. The gallery entrance has pictures of plants and animals covering the wall.
2. Explore the gallery to find the answers to the questions below.
3. Start your journey at the sign marking the oak hickory forest in the Ozark highlands.

1 Find the text panel titled *Life in a Riffle*. A **riffle** is an area of fast-moving water in a stream. Why would it be difficult for a fish or invertebrate to live in one of these areas? How does body shape affect survival in a riffle?

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2 Read the text panel titled *Survival Tactics*. What do invertebrates need that they cannot get in slow-moving waters? How have **mayfly** and **midge** larvae adapted to survive in slow-moving water?

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3  What does it mean that skinks have chemosensory abilities? How do these abilities help them?

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4 Acorns are a source of food for many animals in the oak hickory forest. How do oak trees survive with so many animals eating their seeds? What are some ways that seed-eating animals can actually help trees reproduce?

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5 Go to the limestone cave. How does acidic ground water cause limestone caves to form?

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6 Find the information on plant predators and defenses to the left of the Bison. What adaptations do prairie plants have that keep predators away?

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7 Look for the information on **buffalo wallows** to the left of the bison. What is a wallow? List one way wallows can help other mixed grass prairie species and one way they can harm other short-grass prairie species.

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8 Find the panel labeled *Strange Bedfellows*. Describe the beneficial relationship between Great Plains narrowmouth toads and brown tarantulas.

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