

# OKLAHOMA ROCKS! State Parks 2.0

Oklahoma is currently home to 39 state parks. These parks are located across Oklahoma and showcase a vast array of geological features. In this issue of Oklahoma Rocks! we will visit 5 of these state parks and learn about the specific landscape of each.

## Black Mesa State Park

Did you know that dinosaur bones have been found in Oklahoma?

Black Mesa is located in Cimarron County in the Oklahoma panhandle. It is the highest point in Oklahoma at 4,973 feet above sea level. It is the only location in Oklahoma where rocks from both the Jurassic and Triassic periods are exposed. These are time periods in the past when dinosaurs roamed the Earth.

Between 1935 and 1942, J.W. Stovall was working at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History and opened 17 dinosaur bone quarries in this area; one is along Hwy 325 southeast of the preserve. In this quarry alone, 3,500 bones were discovered, including those from Apatosaurus, Stegosaurus, Saurophaganax Maximus and others. Trace fossils were also found.

Trace fossils provide us with evidence of an animal's activity, such as feeding, resting or locomotion. This fossil evidence provides clues to help us understand the past. While dinosaur bones can tell us who was living in the area, their footprints provide us with a unique snapshot of what they were doing! We can use our understanding of modern animals to learn more about life from the past. For example, we can tell:



- If the tracks were made by carnivorous or herbivorous dinosaur (typically narrow feet with pointed toes indicate a carnivorous dinosaur, and broad feet with rounded toes indicate herbivorous dinosaurs)
- How dinosaurs moved
- How fast or slow they were moving when they made these tracks
- If they moved in herds

## Make a Dough Fossil!

What you'll need:

- One cup used coffee grounds
- Half a cup of cold coffee
- One cup of plain flour
- Half a cup of salt
- Mixing bowl
- Wax paper
- Objects with which to make 'fossils'

Mix the ingredients together and knead the dough until soft. Spread the dough on wax paper and cut found shapes using a knife, jar, glass or cookie cutter. Press objects into the soft dough to make 'fossil' impressions. The dough can be left to harden overnight.

