



BLACK ROCK DESERT  
HIGH ROCK CANYON  
EMIGRANT TRAILS



NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

## SOLDIER MEADOWS

### Nevada's Threatened and Endangered Species



- **Developing the Lesson:** Tell students that people often associate the word "extinct" with dinosaurs, which have not lived on Earth for more than 66 million years. But there are many creatures, like the dodo, that have only recently become extinct. Why do you think that they have become extinct? Many scientists blame these extinctions on humans. Ask students to think of ways that humans could have caused these animals to become extinct.
- Although extinct species cannot be brought back to life, plants and animals that are endangered, or in danger of becoming extinct, can still be saved. Preserving endangered species is considered by many scientists to be the key to preserving biodiversity, or the variety of life. Biodiversity is important not only because we enjoy having many different types of plants and animals, but also because all living things play important roles in the ecoregions in which they live. Define the terms biodiversity, extinction, and ecoregions. Ask students to describe some of the reasons why they think biodiversity is important, and list their ideas on the board.
  - Biodiversity: The variety of living organisms. Biodiversity encompasses variation at all levels, from the genetic diversity within a species to the variation between higher level evolutionary groupings such as families and classes. It also includes the variety of ecosystems, habitats and the natural interactions of species in the wild.
  - Extinction: The state in which all members of a group of organisms, such as a species, population, family or class, have disappeared from a given habitat, geographic area, or the entire world.
  - Ecoregions: Places characterized by distinct climates, ecological features, and plant and animal communities.
- It may be surprising to some that Nevada ranks 11<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in the number of different species it has; Nevada has 3,872 species that make up its unique biodiversity. Nevada is 10<sup>th</sup> in plant diversity and 9<sup>th</sup> in mammal diversity. Does this astonish anyone? Brainstorm a list of some of Nevada's plant and animal species. Another list that Nevada ranks high in, which may also be surprising to some, is for species at risk. Nevada is 3<sup>rd</sup> in our country for species at risk (behind Hawaii and California). A species at risk can be considered endangered or threatened. Define the terms endangered or threatened.
  - Threatened or Endangered Species: Under the Endangered Species Act in the United States, a species or subspecies is regarded as endangered when it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant part of its normal range. A species is considered threatened when it is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future.

