



Red Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

Size: L: 5.5 - 7.9 in., WS: 11 in.
Description: Stocky finch with distinct crossed bill, darker wings and males red, females yellow-green.
Diet: Seeds, mainly conifer
Habitat: Coniferous forest
Viewing: Year-round, sporadic



House Finch

Haemorhous mexicanus

Size: L: 5.0 - 5.5 in., WS: 8.0 - 9.8 in.
Description: Strong cone beak, buffy brown with darker streaks, males have red through head and chest.
Diet: Seeds
Habitat: Rural to urban
Viewing: Year-round, statewide



Pygmy Nuthatch

Sitta pygmaea

Size: L: 3.5 - 4.3 in., WS: 7.75 in.
Description: Small body with larger thin bill, light under, slate above with brown cap.
Diet: Insects, some seeds
Habitat: Ponderosa pine forest
Viewing: Year-round, Panhandle

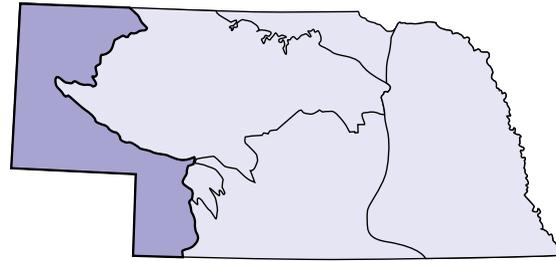


American Goldfinch

Spinus tristis

Size: L: 4.3 - 5.0 in., WS: 7.5 - 8.7 in.
Description: Small finch with gray to orange beak and white wing bars. Males yellow and black, females tan.
Diet: Seeds
Habitat: Rural to urban
Viewing: Year-round, statewide

Shortgrass Prairie Region



The shortgrass prairie region includes the southwestern corner and Panhandle of Nebraska. This area is made up of short to mixed grass prairie and the Pine Ridge. The shortgrass prairie is the driest and warmest of the Great Plains grasslands.

This region receives an average of 12 - 17 inches of rainfall annually and consists of buffalo grass and blue grama. The Pine Ridge is found in northwestern Nebraska and is dominated by ponderosa pine. More than 300 species of migratory and resident birds can be found in the shortgrass prairie region, as well as a variety of mammals, plants, reptiles, insects and other species.



Bird Viewing Tips

1. **Stay quiet and calm.**
2. **Be discreet** — wear muted clothing and limit fragrances.
3. **Use your ears!** Listen for bird songs and calls.
4. **Use binoculars** to get a closer look, always keep a respectful distance from wildlife.
5. **Be patient.**
6. **Go to where the habitat is** — visit state parks and other public lands.
7. **Do your homework** — learn what species of birds live in the area.



Birds of the Nebraska Shortgrass Prairie

Beaks as Tools

NOT TO SCALE

Identification Guide

NEBRASKA

— GAME PARKS —

OutdoorNebraska.org



Burrowing Owl

Athene cunicularia

Size: L: 7.5 - 9.8 in., WS: 21.6 in.

Description: Brown back with white spots, lighter chest with brown spots, white throat and eyebrows, yellow eyes and bill.

Diet: Small animals

Habitat: Grasslands, associated with prairie dog towns

Viewing: Year-round, statewide except SW corner



Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Size: L: 25 - 32 in., WS: 67 - 70 in.

Description: Bare red head, dark feathers, under-wings are two-toned with "fingered" tips.

Diet: Carrion

Habitat: Open areas, rural to urban

Viewing: Summer, statewide



Mountain Bluebird

Sialia currucoides

Size: L: 3.0 - 7.9 in., WS: 11 - 14.2 in.

Description: Males are bright sky blue, lighter below. Females are gray/brown with some blue on wings. Both have round bellies and thin beaks.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Open woodland

Viewing: Spring-fall, Panhandle



Spotted Towhee

Pipilo maculatus

Size: L: 6.7 - 8.3 in., WS: 11 in.

Description: Large sparrow with black head, back and tail. White spots on wings and tail tips. Rusty sides and white belly.

Diet: Insects, grain, and berries

Habitat: Brush, rural to urban

Viewing: Summer, Panhandle; winter, southeast



American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

Size: L: 8.7 - 12.2 in., WS: 20 - 24 in.

Description: Pale spotted front, rusty spotted back, black band above tail, and black mustache. Males have slate blue wings.

Diet: Carnivore, mostly insects

Habitat: Open areas

Viewing: Year-round, Panhandle



American Avocet

Recurvirostra americana

Size: L: 17.0 - 18.5 in., WS: 28.4 in.

Description: Breeding males have rusty head/neck, pale gray/white through body, black on wings and back, long blue-gray legs, long black upturned bill.

Diet: Aquatic invertebrates

Habitat: Wetlands

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide



Western Kingbird

Tyrannus verticalis

Size: L: 8.0 - 9.4 in., WS: 15 - 16 in.

Description: Gray head, yellow belly, white throat and chest, black tail with white outer feathers.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Open grass/shrubland

Viewing: Summer, statewide



Western Meadowlark

Sturnella neglecta

Size: L: 6.3 - 10.2 in., WS: 22 - 24 in.

Description: Robin sized with short tail, flat head, long bill, brown back, yellow front, and black V on chest.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Grasslands

Viewing: Year-round, statewide



Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

Size: L: 18 - 22 in., WS: 45 - 52.4 in.

Description: Large raptor known for rusty red tail. Plumage can vary widely, but generally dark brown above and light below.

Diet: Carnivore, mainly small

Habitat: Fields to woodlands

Viewing: Year-round, statewide



Gadwall

Mareca strepera

Size: L: 18.0 - 22.4 in., WS: 33 in.

Description: Mottled brown, Males with more gray and a black patch on tail. Females have orange around edge of bill.

Diet: Aquatic plants and insects

Habitat: Wetlands, plains

Viewing: Summer in SW Panhandle, spring/fall statewide



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Poliophtila caerulea

Size: L: 4.0 - 4.3 in., WS: 6.3 in.

Description: Small and round bird with pale blue-gray back, white under, dark tail with white outer feathers.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Woodland

Viewing: Spring-fall, east or west, not central



Black-billed Magpie

Pica hudsonia

Size: L: 18 - 24 in., WS: 22 - 24 in.

Description: Black with iridescent on wings and tail. White on wing tips, back, and belly. Long tail.

Diet: Carrion, berries, insects, and grain

Habitat: Various, rural to urban

Viewing: Year-round, western two-thirds



Ferruginous Hawk

Buteo regalis

Size: L: 22 - 27 in., WS: 52.4 - 66 in.

Description: Large raptor, broad wings with pointed tips, light to dark morphs, rusty legs.

Diet: Carnivore, small animals

Habitat: Grass to shrubland

Viewing: Spring-summer, Panhandle; winter southeast



Blue-winged Teal

Spatula discors

Size: L: 14 - 16 in., WS: 22 - 24.4 in.

Description: Small, mottled-brown duck with wing-patch of powder blue, white, and green. Males have white crescent behind bill.

Diet: Aquatic plants and insects

Habitat: Vegetated wetlands

Viewing: Summer, statewide



Yellow Warbler

Setophaga petechia

Size: L: 4.7 - 5.0 in., WS: 6.3 - 7.9 in.

Description: Small bright yellow bird with a large black eye. Males have red streaking on chest.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Open woodland

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide



Northern Flicker

Colaptes auratus

Size: L: 11 - 12 in., WS: 16.5 - 20 in.

Description: Gray/brown all over, black stripes on back, black spots and bib on front, long strong bill.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Rural to urban, open woodland, parks, field edges

Viewing: Year-round, statewide