



### Lark Sparrow

*Chondestes grammacus*

**Size:** L: 6.0 - 7.6 in., WS: 11 in.  
**Description:** Chestnut and cream head, streaked brown above, pale below, black "mustache" and spot on chest, long tail with white corners.  
**Diet:** Seeds  
**Habitat:** Grasslands  
**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



### Grasshopper Sparrow

*Ammodramus saviannarum*

**Size:** L: 4.3 - 4.7 in., WS: 8.0 - 8.5 in.  
**Description:** Streaky sparrow with brown above, buff below, white eye ring, yellow lore, short tail.  
**Diet:** Insects  
**Habitat:** Grasslands  
**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



### Dark-eyed Junco

*Junco hyemalis*

**Size:** L: 5.5 - 6.3 in., WS: 7 - 9.8 in.  
**Description:** Variable, gray-brown back, head and chest, white belly, dark eyes, pink bill, and white outer tail feathers.  
**Diet:** Seeds and insects  
**Habitat:** Rural to urban  
**Viewing:** Fall-spring, statewide

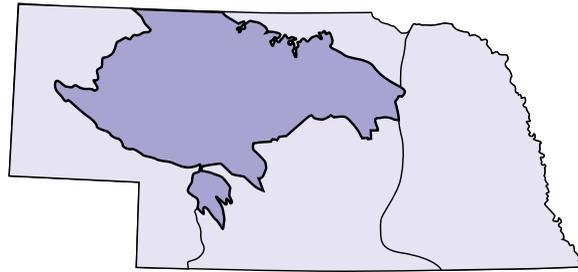


### Loggerhead Shrike

*Lanius ludovicianus*

**Size:** L: 8 - 9 in., WS: 11 - 12.6 in.  
**Description:** Songbird with a gray head/neck, hooked bill, white underside and wing-patch, black wing, tail and mask.  
**Diet:** Insects and small animals  
**Habitat:** Grasslands with scrub or hedgerows  
**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide; winter, SE corner

## Sandhills Region



The Sandhills region in Nebraska contains the largest area of stabilized grass covered dunes in the western hemisphere. Of the 13 million acres, over a million of these are wetlands. There are 1,600 Sandhill lakes, comprising around 80,000 surface acres of water. These wetland areas are important for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, providing much-needed habitat. This area also sits directly atop the Ogallala aquifer, for which the wetlands play an important role in retaining and filtering the water.

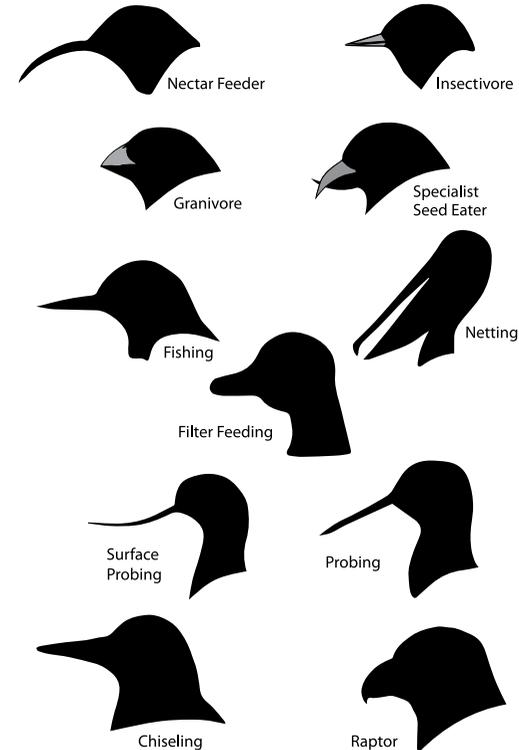
This area receives 17 - 23 inches of water annually. The sandy soil of the area makes farming difficult, so this area contains one of the largest tracts of unplowed prairie in North America. People primarily use the Sandhills region for cattle grazing. With few lights from buildings and infrastructure across the Sandhills, there is low light pollution, making the area ideal for stargazing.



## 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.

### Beaks as Tools



NOT TO SCALE



# Birds of the Nebraska Sandhills



## Identification Guide

NEBRASKA  
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### Greater Prairie-chicken

*Tympanuchus cupido*  
**Size:** L: 17 - 18 in., WS: 24 - 28 in.  
**Description:** Large grouse with barred brown plumage, males have orange air sacs on their neck used in display.  
**Diet:** Seeds and insects  
**Habitat:** Open grasslands  
**Viewing:** Year-round, central and limited southeast



### Great Blue Heron

*Ardea herodias*  
**Size:** L: 38 - 54 in., WS: 65.8 - 79 in.  
**Description:** Tall with long legs and neck, dagger-like bill, gray body, lighter face with black stripe above eye.  
**Diet:** Fish, frogs, small birds  
**Habitat:** Wetlands  
**Viewing:** Spring/fall, statewide; summer, northeast



### Trumpeter Swan

*Cygnus buccinator*  
**Size:** L: 54 - 62 in., WS: 80 in.  
**Description:** Large white bird with long neck, black on legs and bill, extending onto face.  
**Diet:** Aquatic plants, some insects/fish  
**Habitat:** Open areas near shallow water  
**Viewing:** Summer, northern Sandhills



### Swainson's Hawk

*Buteo swainsoni*  
**Size:** L: 19 - 22 in., WS: 46 - 54 in.  
**Description:** Brown/gray above, white below, brown-red chest, dark beak and yellow legs.  
**Diet:** Mammals and insects  
**Habitat:** Grasslands  
**Viewing:** Spring/fall, statewide; summer, west



### Sharp-tailed Grouse

*Tympanuchus phasianellus*  
**Size:** L: 16 - 18.5 in., WS: 20 - 24 in.  
**Description:** Chicken-like bird, spotted white and brown with short pointed tail with white at base.  
**Diet:** Plants and grains  
**Habitat:** Open grasslands  
**Viewing:** Year-round, Sandhills



### Long-billed Curlew

*Numenius americanus*  
**Size:** L: 19.7 - 25.5 in., WS: 24 - 35 in.  
**Description:** Cinnamon colored plumage that is speckled brown, long neck, long curved black bill and legs.  
**Diet:** Worms, crabs, insects  
**Habitat:** Wetlands and shortgrass prairie  
**Viewing:** Summer, northwest



### Green-winged Teal

*Anas carolinensis*  
**Size:** L: 12 - 15 in., WS: 20.5 - 23 in.  
**Description:** Small mottled brown duck with green wing-patch and white, vertical side stripe and rump patch. Breeding males have cinnamon head with green streak on side.  
**Diet:** Seeds, some small fish  
**Habitat:** Wetlands  
**Viewing:** Spring/fall, statewide; summer, northeast



### Red-tailed Hawk

*Buteo jamaicensis*  
**Size:** L: 18 - 22 in., WS: 45 - 52.4 in.  
**Description:** Large raptor known for their rusty red tail. Plumage can vary widely, but generally dark brown above and light below.  
**Diet:** Carnivore, mainly small mammals  
**Habitat:** Fields to woodlands  
**Viewing:** Year-round, statewide



### Ring-necked Pheasant

*Phasianus colchicus*  
**Size:** L: 20.0 - 27.6 in., WS: 20 - 24 in.  
**Description:** Buffy cinnamon with red face, green neck with white ring at base, and long barred tail.  
**Diet:** Seeds, insects, fruit  
**Habitat:** Agricultural land and fallow fields  
**Viewing:** Year-round, statewide



### White-faced Ibis

*Plegadis chihi*  
**Size:** L: 18 - 22 in., WS: 37 in.  
**Description:** Large maroon shore bird with dark green wings, long legs, and long, downturned beak.  
**Diet:** Aquatic invertebrates  
**Habitat:** Wetlands  
**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



### Eared Grebe

*Podiceps nigricollis*  
**Size:** L: 11.8 - 14 in., WS: 20.5 - 21.6 in.  
**Description:** Small gray and white water bird, thin bill and red eyes, males black and cinnamon in breeding.  
**Diet:** Aquatic insects, shrimp, fish  
**Habitat:** Wetlands  
**Viewing:** Fall/spring, statewide; summer, western Sandhills



### Yellow-breasted Chat

*Icteria virens*  
**Size:** L: 7 in., WS: 9.8 in.  
**Description:** Olive/gray above, bright yellow chest and white "spectacles".  
**Diet:** Insects  
**Habitat:** Shrubland  
**Viewing:** Spring-fall, west



### Killdeer

*Charadrius vociferus*  
**Size:** L: 8 - 11 in., WS: 18 - 19 in.  
**Description:** Brown shorebird with white belly, chin, and face markings, two black chest bars and long legs.  
**Diet:** Insects  
**Habitat:** Rural to urban  
**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



### 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 Grebe

*Aechmophorus occidentalis*  
**Size:** L: 21.6 - 29.5 in., WS: 31 - 34 in.  
**Description:** Black back and face, white neck and underside, long neck and thick bill.  
**Diet:** Fish  
**Habitat:** Wetlands  
**Viewing:** Fall/spring, statewide; summer, western Sandhills



### Western Meadowlark

*Sturnella neglecta*  
**Size:** L: 6.3 - 10.2 in., WS: 22 - 24 in.  
**Description:** Short tail, flat head, long bill, brown back, yellow front, and black V on chest.  
**Diet:** Insects  
**Habitat:** Grasslands  
**Viewing:** Year-round, statewide