Mixedgrass Prairie Region

The mixedgrass prairie region is a transitional zone between the tallgrass prairie of the east and the shortgrass prairie of the west. As a result, the vegetation of this area varies, with a combination of tallgrass and shortgrass prairie plants. There are many wetlands, rivers, and streams. Wooded zones surround almost every waterway. Precipitation is greater in the east, with about 28 inches annually, compared with 20 inches in the west.

The land is primarily used for agriculture, with around two-thirds converted to cropland and much of the remaining third used for grazing livestock. There is however, a diversity of wildlife found in this region, including the annual spring staging of 500,000 sandhill cranes around the Platte River in central Nebraska. This spectacle draws around 80,000 nature enthusiasts each year, with about half from outside of Nebraska.

Mammal Viewing Tips

Mammals can be difficult to see due to their secretive nature.

1. Stay quiet and calm.
2. Be discreet — wear muted clothing and limit fragrances.
3. Look for signs — tracks and scat can tell you if a mammal is in the area, even when you don’t see them.
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 mammals live in the area.

Tracks

**American Badger**
- Length: 2.5 - 3 in.
- Width: 2.3 - 2.8 in.
- Stride: 6 - 12 in. (walking)

**Beaver**
- Length: f 2 - 3.2 in., h 5 - 7 in.
- Width: f 2 - 3.5 in., h 3.3 - 5 in.
- Stride: 3 - 6.5 in. (walking)

**Coyote**
- Length: 2 - 3.2 in.
- Width: 1.4 - 2.4 in.
- Stride: 8 - 16 in. (walking)

**Bobcat**
- Length: 1.8 - 2.5 in.
- Width: 1.8 - 2.5 in.
- Stride: 8 - 16 in. (walking)

**White-tailed Deer**
- Length: 2 - 3.4 in.
- Width: 1.6 - 2.5 in.
- Stride: 10 - 22 in. (walking)
**Eastern Cottontail**  
*Sylvilagus floridanus*  
*Size:* L: 15.6 - 18.8 in., W: 1.8 - 3.4 lbs.  
*Description:* Buff-brown fur, some black/gray hair tips, rufous patch on back of neck and white. Large eyes, long ears, powerful hind legs and short puffy brown and white tail.  
*Diet:* Plants  
*Habitat:* Rural to urban  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**River Otter**  
*Lontra canadensis*  
*Description:* Semi-aquatic, brown fur, flat head, long body and tail, short legs.  
*Diet:* Fish, eggs, crayfish, reptiles and small mammals  
*Habitat:* Rivers, ponds, lakes and marshes  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Red Fox**  
*Vulpus vulpus*  
*Size:* L: 18 - 35.4 in., W: 6.5 - 24 lbs.  
*Description:* Fur light to deep red/brown, triangle face and ears, dark nose, eyes, and legs/feet. Bushy tail often with a white tip.  
*Diet:* Small mammals, insects, seeds and fruit  
*Habitat:* Rural to urban  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Big Brown Bat**  
*Eptesicus fuscus*  
*Size:* L: 4.3 - 5.1 in., W: 17 - 23 g.  
*Description:* Tan-brown body, black and hairless face, wings, and tail. Females are larger than males.  
*Diet:* Insects  
*Habitat:* Rural to urban  
*Viewing:* Year-round (hibernating November - April), statewide

**American Badger**  
*Taxidea taxus*  
*Description:* Long brown-black fur with white cheeks and white stripe from nose to back of neck.  
*Diet:* Animals, mainly small prey  
*Habitat:* Open areas, prairies  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Coyote**  
*Canis latrans*  
*Description:* Gray-brown fur above, whiter below. Triangular ears, black nose and bushy tail.  
*Diet:* Various animals and some plants  
*Habitat:* Various, rural to urban  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**American Beaver**  
*Castor canadensis*  
*Size:* L: 36 - 52 in., W: 34 - 64 lbs.  
*Description:* Large, semi-aquatic rodent, dark brown fur, short front legs with large claws, webbed hind feet, orange teeth and long, flat scaly tail.  
*Diet:* Bark, leaves, aquatic vegetation  
*Habitat:* Areas with slow-moving fresh water  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Raccoon**  
*Procyon lotor*  
*Size:* L: 24 - 38 in., W: 7.6 - 20.0 lbs.  
*Description:* Stout gray-brown with black mask and rings on bushy tail. Pointed face, dexterous front paws to feel and grasp food.  
*Diet:* Small animals, fruit, garbage  
*Habitat:* Rural to urban  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Bobcat**  
*Lynx rufus*  
*Size:* L: 30 - 48 in., W: 11 - 30 lbs.  
*Description:* Varied brown fur with darker speckle/spotting, tufted ears, large paws, and short, bobbed tail.  
*Diet:* Animals, mainly small prey  
*Habitat:* Various, forest to fields  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Striped Skunk**  
*Mephitis mephitis*  
*Description:* Triangular head, bushy tail, black fur with thin white stripe down center of face, and white V starting at the base of the neck.  
*Diet:* Insects, small mammals, seeds and fruit  
*Habitat:* Rural to urban  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**White-tailed Deer**  
*Sylvilagus floridanus*  
*Size:* L: 63 - 86.6 in., W: 115 - 300 lbs.  
*Description:* Red-brown fur, white under throat, body and tail. Long legs, short tail. Males have antlers.  
*Diet:* Plants  
*Habitat:* Fields, woods, farmlands  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

---

**Muskrat**  
*Ondatra zibethicus*  
*Size:* L: 16.0 - 25.5 in., W: 2.5 - 3.5 lbs.  
*Description:* Semi-aquatic rodent with dark brown head, coloring gets lighter moving down sides and back. Partly webbed hind toes and long, nearly hairless tail.  
*Diet:* Cattails, aquatic vegetation  
*Habitat:* Shallow water, wetlands  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**Bobcat**  
*Lynx rufus*  
*Size:* L: 30 - 48 in., W: 11 - 30 lbs.  
*Description:* Varied brown fur with darker speckle/spotting, tufted ears, large paws, and short, bobbed tail.  
*Diet:* Animals, mainly small prey  
*Habitat:* Various, forest to fields  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide

**White-tailed Deer**  
*Sylvilagus floridanus*  
*Size:* L: 63 - 86.6 in., W: 115 - 300 lbs.  
*Description:* Red-brown fur, white under throat, body and tail. Long legs, short tail. Males have antlers.  
*Diet:* Plants  
*Habitat:* Fields, woods, farmlands  
*Viewing:* Year-round, statewide