

Planning Your Trip

There are probably a handful of areas within the state where all four upland bird species could be encountered on a single hunt. Realistically, there are quite a few places where three of the four coexist, but you are likely going to have to travel to get all four.

Western Sandhills/Panhandle (6 on map)– Out west, you are inevitably going to have to travel south and east for a chance at a bobwhite, but don't overlook these upland hunting opportunities. Pheasant numbers are typically very good in Box Butte and Sheridan counties, as well as the southernmost counties along the Colorado border. Crescent Lake NWR is home to good numbers of sharpies and pheasants, and the sporadic prairie-chicken as well. Farther west, the Oglala National Grassland and surrounding OFW lands provide endless opportunities for sharptails. This region has a little bit of everything, but you will have to travel a ways to find it.

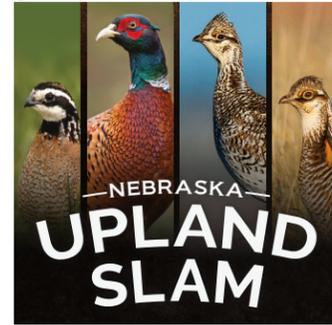
North-Central Sandhills (7 on map)– State and federally owned lands near Valentine provide some excellent mixed bag opportunities. The choppy uplands at Valentine NWR support a good mix of chickens and sharpies, and the dense cattail marshes offer a decent chance at a bonus ring-neck. Sharptails tend to dominate the bag farther west at Samuel B. McKelvie National Forest and Merritt Reservoir Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Bobwhites are the challenge up here. You might find bobwhites around Merritt Reservoir, but a better bet is to travel south and east to find some woody cover at the National Forest near Halsey or around Calamus Reservoir.

Southwest Nebraska (5 on map)– Well-known for its pheasants, the southwest offers a legitimate chance to mix that up with bobwhites and chickens. Prairie-chickens are found in moderate densities throughout the region, but some of the best public land opportunities will be on some of the larger OFW tracts in Chase, Keith, Lincoln and Hayes counties. Bobwhites are more prevalent to the east – target some of the OFW lands east of Highway 83 in Red Willow, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper and Harlan counties. Medicine Creek WMA near Cambridge and Harlan County Lake near Alma also support good numbers of bobwhites intermixed with some ring-necks. You will likely have to travel a ways north to find your sharpies – look at Crescent Lake NWR, Halsey National Forest, or some of the OFW lands in the southern Panhandle.

Southeastern Nebraska (1, 2 on map)– This is prime quail country intermixed with some pheasant opportunities and even a bonus chicken. There are some excellent quail numbers on many of the state-owned WMAs and OFW lands throughout the region. To find a prairie-chicken here, focus on the larger tracts of open grasslands (which are limited in this region) in Thayer, Jefferson, Gage, Pawnee and Johnson counties – and keep in mind you need a special grouse permit if you hunt east of Highway 81.

Upland Slam

The upland slam is meant to bring awareness to Nebraska's excellent mixed-bag opportunities and also highlight the state's great public land resources that are available to everyone.



Nebraska is an upland bird hunter's paradise – the mixed bag capital of the Great Plains – with diverse upland hunting opportunities, long seasons, great access to public lands, and high hunter satisfaction rates. Learn more about the slam at

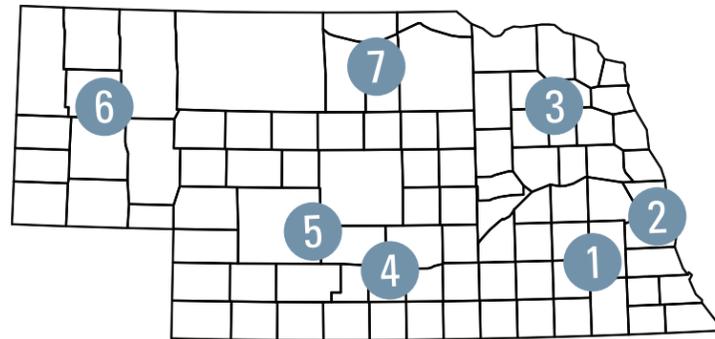
OutdoorNebraska.org/UplandSlam.

Where to Stay

Enjoy Nebraska's Midwestern hospitality with a stay at one of Nebraska's state parks or state recreation areas. To check camping and lodging availability and make reservations, contact our reservation call center at 402-471-1414 (Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., CT) or online at OutdoorNebraska.org.

For a full list of communities in the area, places to stay and things to do, go to VisitNebraska.com.

Contact Us



1. Lincoln headquarters office: 402-471-0641
2. Omaha office: 402-595-2144
3. Norfolk office: 402-370-3374
4. Kearney office: 308-865-5310
5. North Platte office: 308-535-8025
6. Alliance office: 308-763-2940
7. Bassett office: 402-684-2921

Nebraska Game and Parks

2020



UPLAND BIRD MIXED-BAG TRIP PLANNER

MIXED BAG CAPITAL OF THE GREAT PLAINS

Nebraska is the mixed-bag capital of the Great Plains with:

- A diverse landscape rich with mixed-bag opportunities for ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail, sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie-chicken.
- Nearly one million acres of publicly accessible land and online resources to plan your next hunt.

Season Dates

(Anticipated)

- Pheasant & Quail: October 31, 2020 – January 31, 2021
- Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Prairie-chicken: September 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021

Permits/Stamps Required

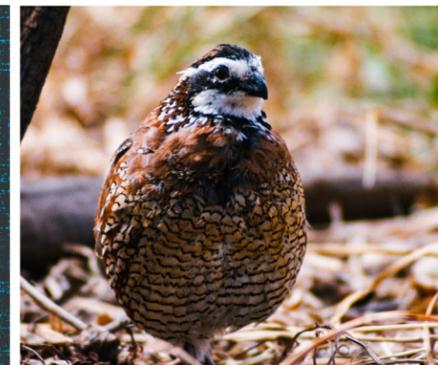
- Nonresident Annual Hunt Permit - \$97 or Two Day Hunt Permit - \$67
- Resident Annual Hunt Permit - \$18

Above prices do not include the Nebraska Habitat Stamp, which is required - \$25

Also, those hunting grouse east of U.S. Highway 81 need a free East Zone permit. For information please call 402-471-5410.

How to Buy a Permit

- Nebraska Game and Parks offices and statewide permit vendors
- Online at OutdoorNebraska.org



Featuring ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail, sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie-chicken

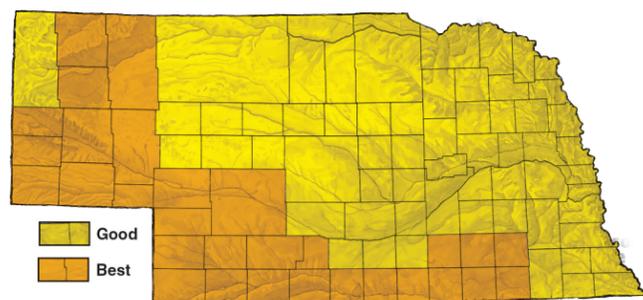
FOUR SPECIES

• Ring-necked Pheasant:



- ✓ **Where to find pheasants:** Ring-necked pheasants can be found in a mixture of habitats – ranging from open grasslands to wetlands to cropland fringes. Hunters should also focus on weedy pastures, unfarmed draws, and tall wheat and milo stubble fields.
- ✓ **Primary Range:** Nebraska’s highest pheasant densities are in southwestern Nebraska and portions of the Panhandle. These landscapes have quite a bit of CRP and are very diverse in terms of other cover types. Crop rotations here include winter wheat, which provides additional nesting cover for pheasants. Most public hunting opportunities within these regions occur on private lands enrolled in the Commission’s Open Fields and Waters (OFW) Program. Historically, Hitchcock, Hayes, Chase and Perkins counties have offered some of the best pheasant opportunities in the Southwest, but surrounding counties should not be overlooked. The southern Panhandle also supports good pheasant numbers, and public access opportunities expanded in this region over the past several years.

Ring-necked Pheasant



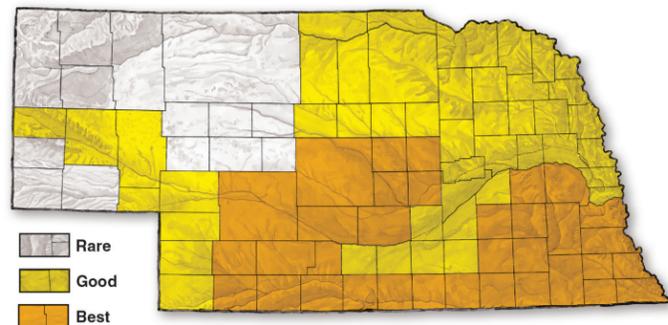
• Northern Bobwhite Quail:



- ✓ **Where to find quail:** Bobwhite quail are an “edge species,” meaning they can be found in areas where two or more habitats converge, i.e. where grasslands border cropland or woodland habitat. During the fall and winter, bobwhites do not stray far from woody cover. Weedy patches within grasslands as well as native shrub thickets are also extensively used by bobwhites.
- ✓ **Primary Range:** Bobwhite densities are highest in southeastern Nebraska and west along the southern border with Kansas. Good quail numbers can also be found in other areas of the state where suitable habitat exists.



Bobwhite Quail

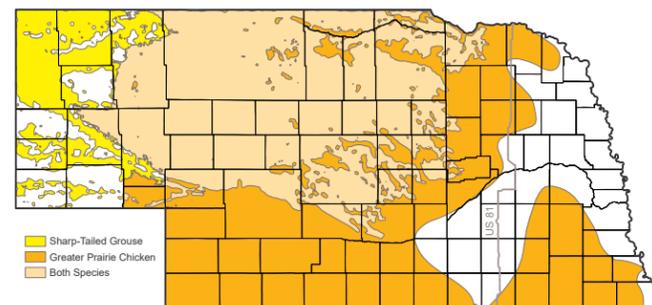


• Sharp-tailed Grouse:



- ✓ **Where to find sharp-tailed grouse:** In many instances, they share the same open habitat as prairie-chickens. Sharpies are often found in close proximity to pockets of low lying shrubs, as these provide a key food source throughout the year. In the Sandhills, both species tend to select pastures that were rested (not grazed) during the summer. In the winter, sharpies tend to bunch up and may use large thickets or linear tree rows.
- ✓ **Primary Range:** Sharptails can be found in higher, choppy dunes of the west-central Sandhills and their distribution extends out into portions of the Panhandle as well. Higher proportions of grouse are found west of Highway 83 in the Sandhills, including Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest, Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and even into the Pine Ridge region. Sharpies can be found on some OFW lands in the southern Panhandle as well.

Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Prairie-Chicken

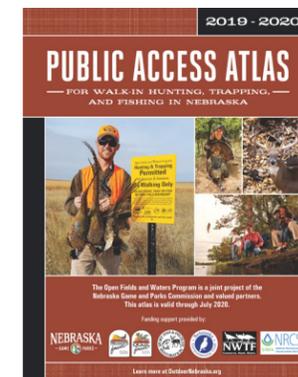


• Greater Prairie-Chicken:



- ✓ **Where to find prairie-chickens:** Prairie-chickens prefer large tracts of undisturbed grasslands often with gently rolling topography, but do occur in landscapes intermixed with cropland (more so than sharpies). This species tends to avoid trees and other obstructions and is typically more abundant in diverse grasslands with a high forb content. Like quail, chickens (and sharpies for that matter) also tend to avoid dense grasslands. If you find yourself struggling to pick your feet up, you likely need to look elsewhere. Hunters typically walk the “tops” of ridges and use the topography to their advantage.
- ✓ **Primary Range:** The central and eastern Sandhills represent the core of the prairie-chicken range in Nebraska, but some more isolated (and huntable) populations occur across southern Nebraska.

Public Lands Hunting Opportunities



The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has joined Pheasants Forever, Inc., the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Districts (NRDs), hunters, anglers, landowners, private organizations and government agencies to deliver an access program designed to enhance wildlife habitat and increase hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities throughout the state. This Public Access Atlas identifies and consolidates nearly one million acres of publicly accessible lands into one easy-to-read atlas specifically for hunters, trappers and anglers. Also available online at OutdoorNebraska.org/PublicAccessAtlas.

Go Online at OutdoorNebraska.org

- Find maps
- Buy a permit
- Season information and dates
- Read hunting and fishing guides
- Find rules and regulations