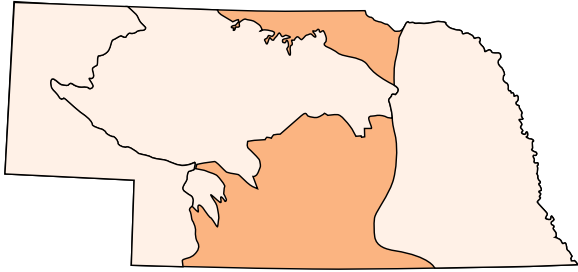


Mixedgrass Prairie Region



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 stream. 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.



Reptile and Amphibian Viewing Tips

1. **Stay quiet and calm.**
2. **Use binoculars** to get a closer look while keeping a respectful distance from wildlife.
3. **Wash your hands before handling** — especially important for amphibians such as frogs, toads and salamanders.
4. **Be patient.**
5. **Go to where the habitat is** — visit state parks and other public lands.
6. **Do your homework** — learn what species live in the area.
7. **Leave no trace** — leave wildlife in nature and nature the way you found it.



Reptiles and Amphibians of the Nebraska Mixedgrass Prairie

Reptiles

Have scales, plates or shields.

Born by hatching from eggs or through live birth.

Lay eggs in the ground.

Breathe using lungs.



Amphibians

Generally have moist, smooth skin.

Born as eggs and go through metamorphosis.

Lay eggs near or in water.

Breathe using lungs, gills or through skin.



Identification Guide

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

OutdoorNebraska.org



Woodhouse's Toad

Anaxyrus woodhousii

Size: L: 2 - 5 in.

Description: Bumpy toad with light gray-tan, variable spotting, white back stripe, and white under with single dark spot on chest.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Variable

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide



Northern Leopard Frog

Lithobates pipiens

Size: L: 2.5 - 4.0 in.

Description: Spotted gray-brown to green frog with light dorsal ridges and white belly.

Diet: Insects and worms

Habitat: Wet grasslands, semi-permanent pools and ponds

Viewing: Spring-fall, north three-fourths



Bullsnake

Pituophis catenifer

Size: L: 30 - 100 in.

Description: Light yellow-tan with dark blotches. Acts like a rattlesnake when threatened by shaking tail in leaf litter to create rattle sound.

Diet: Primarily rodents

Habitat: Prairie, rocky outcrops

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide



Plains Spadefoot

Spea bombifrons

Size: L: 1.3 - 2.5 in.

Description: Smooth dark tan skin, 2 - 4 cream stripes from neck to rump, white bell. Long back legs, spade on each foot, only Nebraska amphibian with vertical slit pupils.

Diet: Invertebrates, larvae, plants

Habitat: Grassland, farmland, sagebrush areas

Viewing: Spring-summer, statewide



Western Tiger Salamander

Ambystoma mavortium

Size: L: 6.0 - 8.5 in.

Description: Dark with smooth slimy skin with yellow barring, short legs and a wide mouth.

Diet: Insects and worms

Habitat: Water or small mammal burrows

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide



Prairie Rattlesnake

Crotalus viridis

Size: L: 31 - 57 in.

Description: **Venomous.** Tan with brown blotches, rattle on tail, cat's eye pupils, and pits near nostrils.

Diet: Mainly small mammals

Habitat: Short- to mixedgrass prairie

Viewing: Spring-summer, western half



Blanchard's Cricket Frog

Acris blanchardi

Size: L: 0.6 - 1.5 in.

Description: Slimy, bumpy skin, reddish-brown to olive green to cream, and a white belly. Long back legs with webbed toes.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Water edge

Viewing: Spring-summer, statewide except Panhandle



Lesser Earless Lizard

Holbrookia maculata

Size: L: 3.9 - 5.0 in.

Description: Gray-tan lizard with gray stripe down back, light speckles down back, lighter side stripes that range from cream to orange-red.

Diet: Insects and small reptiles

Habitat: Sandy prairies

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide except very east



Ornate Box Turtle

Terrapene ornata

Size: L: 4 - 6 in. (shell)

Description: Brown with yellow markings, rounded shell, large front claws, and males have red eyes.

Diet: Succulents, worms and small mammals

Habitat: Prairie

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide except southeast



Boreal Chorus Frog

Pseudacris maculata

Size: L: 0.7 - 1.5 in.

Description: Slimy, grainy golden-bronze skin with three dark lines down back, two more from nose down sides, long legs, white belly.

Diet: Insects

Habitat: Semi to permanent wetlands

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide



Six-lined Racerunner

Aspidoscelis sexlineata

Size: L: 6.0 - 10.5 in.

Description: Brown to bright green with 6 - 8 lines running length of body, long tail, hind legs and toes.

Diet: Insects, snails

Habitat: Dry grassland and woodland edges

Viewing: Late spring-early fall, statewide except west half of Panhandle



Spiny Softshell Turtle

Apalone spinifera

Size: L: 4.9 - 21.0 in. (shell)

Description: Leathery shell, olive with barker blotches, edged with small spines. Webbed feet, long neck and nose.

Diet: Invertebrates, fish and amphibians

Habitat: Lakes, rivers and marshes

Viewing: Spring-fall, statewide except north half of Panhandle