



### 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

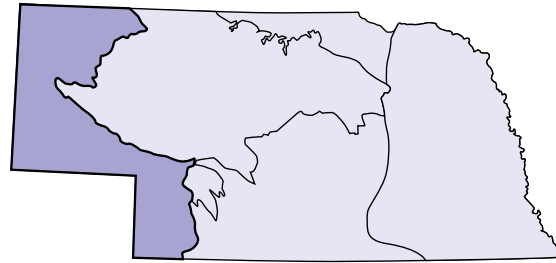


### American Goldfinch

*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](http://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