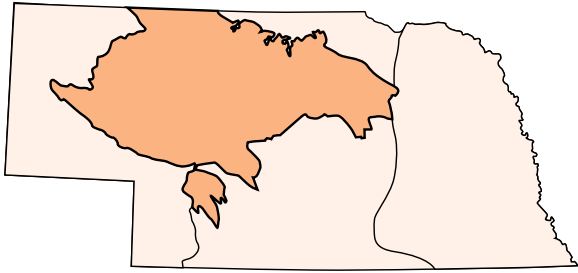


## Sandhills Region



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.



## 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 Sandhills

## Reptiles

Have scales, plates or shields.

Born by hatching from eggs or through live birth.

Lay eggs in the ground.

Breathe using lungs.



*plains garter snake*

## 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.



*tiger salamander*



## Identification Guide

**NEBRASKA**  
— GAME  PARKS —

[OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org)



## Western Hognose Snake

*Heterodon nasicus*

**Size:** L: 15 - 25 in.

**Description:** Stocky tan snake with darker blotches, dark underside, and an upturned scale on end of nose.

**Diet:** Primarily toads and frogs

**Habitat:** Sandhills, short- to mixedgrass prairie

**Viewing:** Spring-summer, west to central



## 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



## 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



## Prairie Lizard

*Sceloporus consobrinus*

**Size:** L: 3.5 - 7.0 in.

**Description:** Rough textured gray-tan lizard with gray dorsal stripe flanked on either side with light cream stripe.

**Diet:** Insects

**Habitat:** Prairie, rock outcrops

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, western two-thirds



## Many-lined Skink

*Plestiodon multivirgatus*

**Size:** L: 4.0 - 7.6 in.

**Description:** Alternating dark and light lines running down length of back, long tail that can detach to distract predators.

**Diet:** Insects

**Habitat:** Prairie, rock outcrops

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide except lower quarter



## 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



## 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: 2.0 - 4.5 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



## 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



## 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



## Blanding's Turtle

*Emydoidea blandingii*

**Size:** L: 5 - 8 in. (shell)

**Description:** Long tail, yellow throat and chin, shell's high dome has dark blotched edges, with yellow below.

**Diet:** Fish, worms, frogs, vegetation

**Habitat:** Sandy wetlands

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, central and central-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