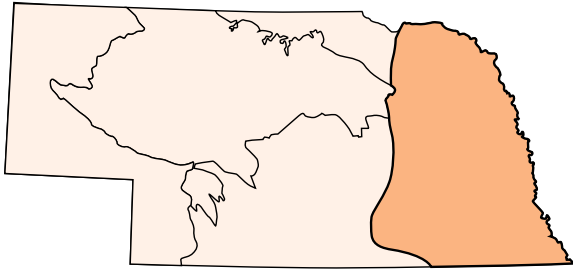


## Tallgrass Prairie Region



The Nebraska tallgrass prairie region comprises the eastern quarter of the state. The key to this landscape is the thick, rich soil that enables deep-rooting prairie plants to survive. Grasses and forbs dominate this grassland region, with few trees, except along water corridors.

This area receives 25 - 36 inches of rain annually. Much of the historic grasslands have been converted, leaving only about 2 percent of unmodified tallgrass prairie habitat. This area incorporates many wetlands, including the saline wetlands, north of Lincoln. This range has a diversity of birds, plants, mammals, reptiles and insects that call it home.



## 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 Tallgrass Prairie

### 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)



### 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



### 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



### Plains Garter Snake

*Thamnophis radix*

**Size:** L: 20 - 28 in.

**Description:** Coloration varies; gray-green with black markings and yellow stripe down center of back.

**Diet:** Small prey; amphibians, worms

**Habitat:** Prairie or edge habitat, often associated with water

**Viewing:** Spring-summer, statewide



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### 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



### 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



### Fox Snake

*Mintonius vulpinus*

**Size:** L: 23.6 - 70.5 in.

**Description:** Yellowish-gray to brown, often with dark blotches down back. Checkerboard patterned belly.

**Diet:** Small mammals

**Habitat:** Grasslands, woodlands

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



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### Cope's Tree Frog

*Hyla chrysoscelis*

**Size:** L: 1.0 - 2.4 in.

**Description:** Skin mottled gray, bright green and tan. Long hind legs with yellow-orange inner thighs. Sticky pads at end of toes.

**Diet:** Insects

**Habitat:** Woodlands near water

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, eastern quarter, central along Platte River



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### Northern Prairie Skink

*Plestiodon septentrionalis*

**Size:** L: 5.0 - 8.8 in.

**Description:** Brown-olive skin, dark striped from head to tail. Two white stripes on each side and small legs.

**Diet:** Insects

**Habitat:** Grassy, rocky hillsides near water

**Viewing:** April-fall, eastern half



### Snapping Turtle

*Chelydra serpentina*

**Size:** L: 20 - 50 in. (shell)

**Description:** Gray-brown water turtle with webbed toes, large head, and darker ridged shell.

**Diet:** Fish and aquatic plants

**Habitat:** Permanent bodies of water

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



### Bullfrog

*Lithobates catesbeianus*

**Size:** L: 3.5 - 8.0 in.

**Description:** Olive to lime green with some darker mottling, long hind legs, lighter belly.

**Diet:** Insects and worms

**Habitat:** Invasive, permanent ponds, lakes, etc.

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, statewide



### 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



### Northern Painted Turtle

*Chrysemys picta*

**Size:** L: 2.5 - 10.0 in. (shell)

**Description:** Smooth, dark top shell, red patterned below, dark skin with yellow stripes.

**Diet:** Small, aquatic plants and animals

**Habitat:** Permanent bodies of water

**Viewing:** Spring-summer, statewide