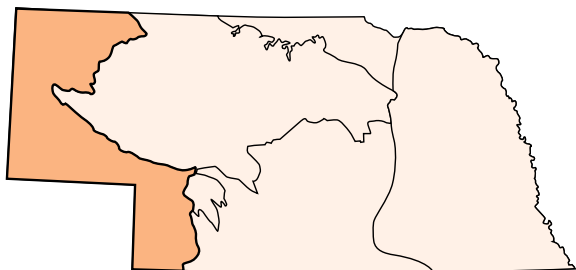


## Shortgrass Prairie Region



The shortgrass prairie region includes the southwestern corner and Panhandle of Nebraska. This area is made up of short- to mixedgrass 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 and other species.



## 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 Shortgrass 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**  
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### 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 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



### 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



### 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



### Greater Short-horned Lizard

*Phrynosoma hernandesi*

**Size:** L: 3 - 5 in.

**Description:** Spiked scales on head and body, gray to tan with irregular blotches.

**Diet:** Insects, especially grasshoppers

**Habitat:** Prairie, rock outcrops

**Viewing:** Spring-fall, Panhandle



### 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



### 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



### 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



### 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 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



### 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