

Planning Your Trip

There are probably a handful of areas within the state where all four upland bird species could be encountered on a single hunt. Realistically, there are quite a few places where three of the four coexist, but you are likely going to have to travel to get all four.

Panhandle (6 on map)— Out west, you are inevitably going to have to travel south and east for a chance at a bobwhite, but don't overlook the excellent upland hunting opportunities this region has to offer. Pheasant numbers are typically very good in Box Butte and Sheridan counties, and especially within the southernmost counties along the Colorado border. Crescent Lake NWR holds pheasants and sharpies. Farther west, the Oglala National Grassland and the OFW lands scattered throughout provide endless opportunities for sharptails. This region has a little bit of everything, but you will have to travel a ways to find it.

Sandhills (7 on map)— State and federally owned lands near Valentine, Nebraska provide excellent mixed bag opportunities. The choppy uplands at Valentine NWR for example, support a good mix of chickens and sharpies, and the dense cattail marshes offer a decent chance at a bonus ring-neck. Sharptails dominate the bag farther west in areas like Samuel B. McKelvie National Forest and Merritt Reservoir Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Travel east and south within the Sandhills to find better opportunities for chickens across the scattering of OFW properties available. Bobwhites are the challenge up here, and some opportunities exist where woody cover can be found.

Southwest Nebraska (5, 4 on map)— Well-known for its pheasants, the southwest offers a legitimate chance to mix that up with bobwhites and chickens. Prairie-chickens are found in moderate densities throughout the region, but some of the best public land opportunities will be on some of the larger OFW tracts in Chase, Keith, Lincoln and Hayes counties. Bobwhites are more prevalent to the east – target some of the OFW lands east of Highway 83 in Red Willow, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper and Harlan counties. Medicine Creek WMA near Cambridge and Harlan County Lake near Alma also support good numbers of bobwhites intermixed with some ring-necks. You will likely have to travel a ways north to find your sharpies – look at Bessey Ranger District National Forest, or some of the OFW lands in the southern Panhandle.

Southeastern Nebraska (1, 2 on map)— This is prime quail country intermixed with some pheasant opportunities and possibly a bonus chicken. There are some excellent quail numbers on many of the state-owned WMAs and OFW lands throughout the region. Some of the best opportunities can be found in the southern two-tiers of counties, and many of the public lands in this region are managed with quail in mind. If you choose to pursue prairie-chickens, you will need a special grouse permit east of Highway 81.

Upland Slam

The upland slam is meant to bring awareness to Nebraska's excellent mixed-bag opportunities and also highlight the state's great public land resources that are available to everyone.



Nebraska is an upland bird hunter's paradise – the mixed bag capital of the Great Plains – with diverse upland hunting opportunities, long seasons, great access to public lands, and high hunter satisfaction rates. Learn more about the slam at

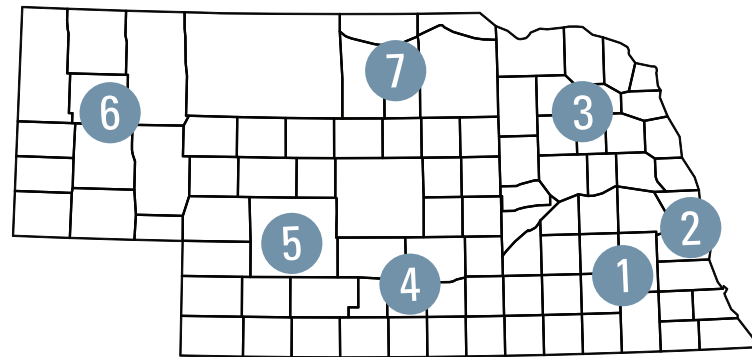
OutdoorNebraska.org/UplandSlam.

Where to Stay

Enjoy Nebraska's Midwestern hospitality with a stay at one of Nebraska's state parks or state recreation areas. To check camping and lodging availability and make reservations, contact our reservation call center at 402-471-1414 (Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., CT) or online at OutdoorNebraska.org.

For a full list of communities in the area, places to stay and things to do, go to VisitNebraska.com.

Contact Us



1. Lincoln headquarters office: 402-471-0641
2. Omaha office: 402-595-2144
3. Norfolk office: 402-370-3374
4. Kearney office: 308-865-5310
5. North Platte office: 308-535-8025
6. Alliance office: 308-763-2940
7. Bassett office: 402-684-2921

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

2023



UPLAND BIRD MIXED-BAG TRIP PLANNER

MIXED BAG CAPITAL OF THE GREAT PLAINS

Nebraska is the mixed-bag capital of the Great Plains with:

- A diverse landscape rich with mixed-bag opportunities for ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail, sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie-chicken.
- Over 1.2 million acres of publicly accessible land and online resources to plan your next hunt.

Season Dates

- Pheasant & Quail: October 28, 2023 – January 31, 2024
- Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Prairie-chicken: September 1, 2023 – January 31, 2024

Permits/Stamps Required

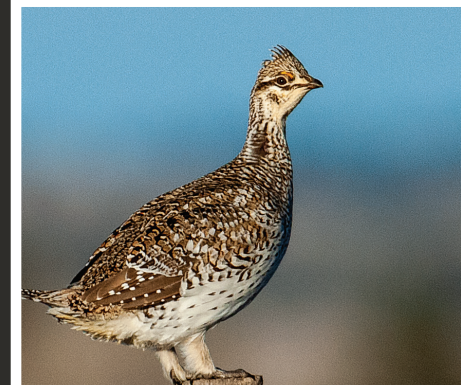
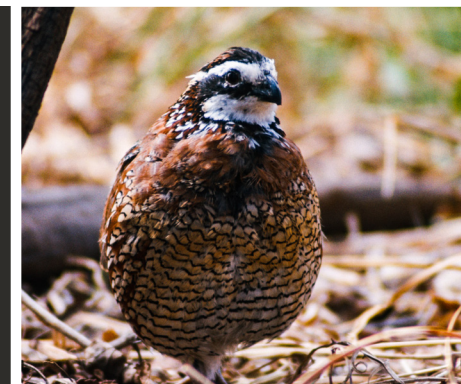
- Nonresident Annual Hunt Permit - \$109 or Two-Day Hunt Permit - \$76
- Nonresident Youth (under age 16) Annual Hunt Permit - \$18
- Resident Annual Hunt Permit - \$18

Above prices do not include the Nebraska Habitat Stamp, which is required - \$25

Also, those hunting grouse east of U.S. Highway 81 need a free East Zone permit. For information please call 402-471-5410.

How to Buy a Permit

- Nebraska Game and Parks offices and statewide permit vendors
- Online at OutdoorNebraska.org



Featuring ring-necked pheasant, bobwhite quail, sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie-chicken

FOUR SPECIES

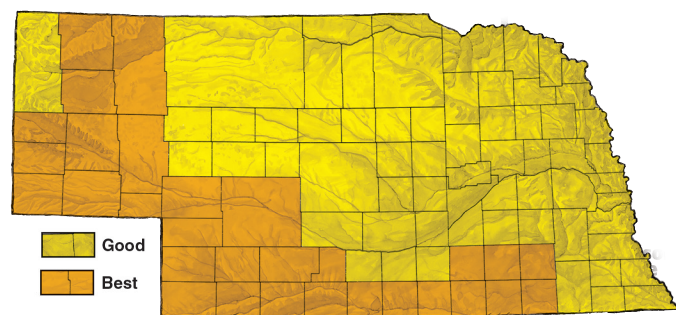
• Ring-necked Pheasant:



✓ **Where to find pheasants:** Ring-necked pheasants can be found in a mixture of habitats – ranging from open grasslands to wetlands to cropland fringes. Hunters should focus on dense stands of CRP, wetland areas, unfarmed draws, weedy pastures, and tall wheat and milo stubble fields.

✓ **Primary Range:** Nebraska’s highest pheasant densities are in southwestern Nebraska and portions of the Panhandle. These landscapes have quite a bit of CRP and are very diverse in terms of other cover types. Crop rotations here include winter wheat, which provides additional nesting cover for pheasants. Most public hunting opportunities within these regions occur on private lands enrolled in the Commission’s Open Fields and Waters Program. Historically, the southwest has offered some of the best pheasant opportunities as well as abundant public access, but other regions should not be overlooked. The southern Panhandle as well as portions of northeastern Nebraska, can also support good pheasant numbers, especially in areas with more CRP present on the landscape.

Ring-necked Pheasant



• Northern Bobwhite Quail:

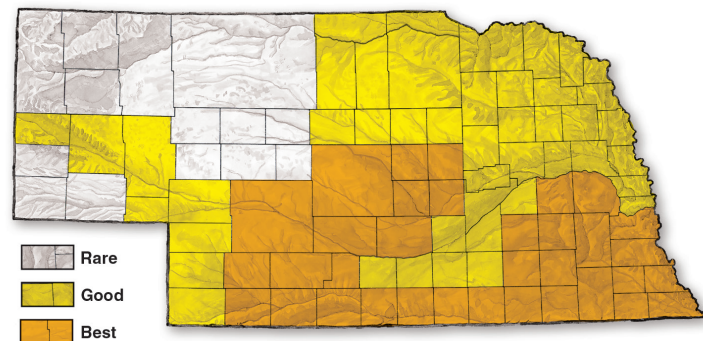


✓ **Where to find quail:** Bobwhite quail are an “edge species,” meaning they can be found in areas where two or more habitats converge, i.e. where grasslands border cropland or woodland habitat. During the fall and winter, bobwhites do not stray far from woody cover. Weedy patches within grasslands as well as native shrub thickets are also extensively used by bobwhites.

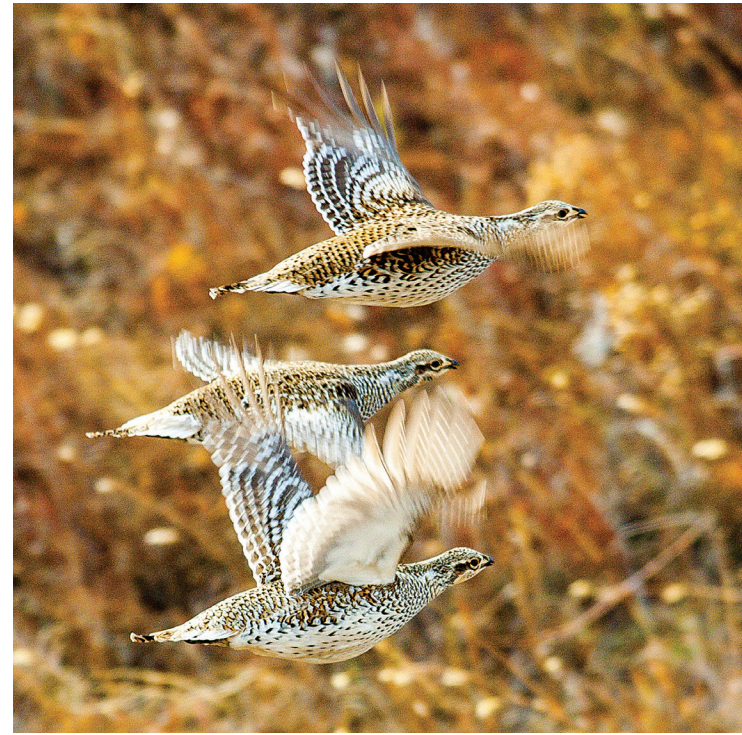
✓ **Primary Range:** Bobwhite densities are highest in southeastern Nebraska and west along the southern border with Kansas. Good quail numbers can also be found in other areas of the state where suitable habitat exists.



Bobwhite Quail



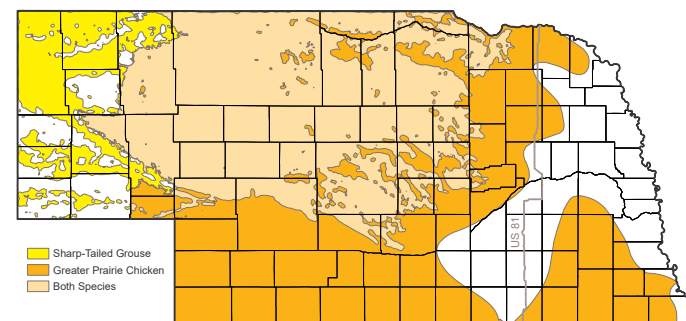
• Sharp-tailed Grouse:



✓ **Where to find sharp-tailed grouse:** In many instances, they share the same open habitat as prairie-chickens. Sharpies are often found in close proximity to pockets of low lying shrubs, as these provide a key food source throughout the year. In the Sandhills, both species tend to select pastures that were moderately grazed or rested during the summer. In the winter, sharpies tend to bunch up and may use large thickets or linear tree rows.

✓ **Primary Range:** Sharptails can be found in higher, choppy dunes of the west-central Sandhills and their distribution extends out into portions of the Panhandle as well. Higher proportions of grouse are found west of Highway 83 in the Sandhills, including including Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest, Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, National Grassland in the northern panhandle, as well OFW properties in the southern panhandle as well.

Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Prairie-Chicken

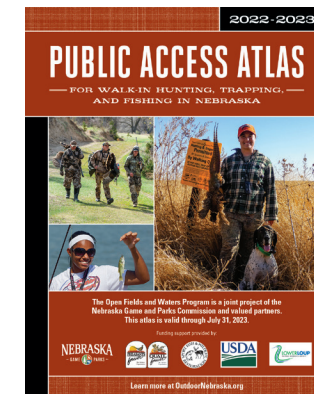


• Greater Prairie-Chicken:



✓ **Where to find prairie-chickens:** Prairie-chickens prefer large tracts of undisturbed grasslands often with gently rolling topography, but do occur in landscapes intermixed with cropland (more so than sharpies). This species tends to avoid trees and other obstructions and is typically more abundant in diverse grasslands with a high forb content. Like quail, chickens (and sharpies for that matter) also tend to avoid dense grasslands. If you find yourself struggling to pick your feet up, you likely need to look elsewhere. Hunters typically walk the “tops” of ridges and use the topography to their advantage.

✓ **Primary Range:** The expansive, central and eastern Sandhills represent the core of the prairie-chicken range in Nebraska. Good opportunities can be found in southwest and south-central Nebraska as well, in areas where rangeland is more abundant on the landscape



Public Lands Hunting Opportunities

By working cooperatively, the Nebraska Game and Parks and its partners aim to increase hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities in Nebraska. The Public Access Atlas identifies and consolidates over 1.2 million acres of publicly accessible lands into one easy-to-use publication. The atlas is published annually and is also available online at OutdoorNebraska.org/PublicAccessAtlas.

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Go Online at OutdoorNebraska.org

- Find maps
- Buy a permit
- Season information and dates
- Read Fishing & Hunting guides
- Find rules and regulations