

Pocket Guide to Birds of Nebraska



Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Key to the Range Maps

Maps in this guide are color-coded to indicate where each bird species may be found during different times of the year:

green = summer

cross-hatch =
migration



yellow = year-round

blue = winter

*Front cover photo of Red-tailed Hawk
courtesy of Bill Schmoker*

*Back cover photo of Sandhill Cranes near Kearney
courtesy of Marion Ball*

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Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

The mission of *Bird Conservancy of the Rockies* is to conserve birds and their habitats through science, education and land stewardship.

Our Land Stewardship team and network of Private Lands Wildlife Biologist was developed to address prairie bird conservation through voluntary cooperative partnerships with private landowners and resource professionals. We provide tools, resources and methods that aim to enhance the health and productivity of working lands for the benefit of rural communities and wildlife. Find a Private Lands Wildlife Biologist near you at www.birdconservancy.org/stewardship.

Please consider supporting our bird conservation efforts by making a donation at www.birdconservancy.org.



Bird Conservancy
of the Rockies

Connecting People, Birds and Land

Acknowledgments

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The diet icons were created by Chris Jordison of Coventry Design Studio and originally appeared in the Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation publication *A Land Manager's Guide to Grassland Birds of Saskatchewan*. Our thanks to Sharon Metz for allowing us to use them.

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About This Guide

This guide serves as an introduction to the birds of Nebraska. Not all of the bird species found in Nebraska are included; instead, the guide focuses on birds that are commonly seen or are species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on prairie birds and the birds of western Nebraska. Species are organized according to their relationships to each other; for example, hawks are grouped together, shorebirds are together, etc. Each species account has the following sections:

Map: A general guide to a species' distribution in Nebraska throughout the year. Because birds are mobile, and distributions shift as conditions change, the species may occur outside the depicted range. A key to the map colors is inside the front cover.

Identification: Description of adult birds in spring/summer or winter plumage. Differences between the sexes are noted.

Habitat: Primary habitat(s) the species uses for

nesting, feeding, or roosting.

Feeding: How and where the bird searches for food, as well as its diet. Explanations of the diet icons are inside the back cover.

Conservation: Population status in North America (and in Nebraska, in some cases) and suggested actions you can take to help conserve the species. Although the populations of many species are stable or even increasing, it is important to keep common birds common, in order to maintain a complete suite of species in a fully functioning ecosystem. For more detailed information, refer to the Nebraska Natural Legacy Plan or the Nebraska Bird Library:

[http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/wildlife/
programs/legacy](http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/wildlife/programs/legacy)

<http://www.nebraskabirdlibrary.org>

Key to the Diet Icons

These icons represent the primary foods of each bird species.



Grain, grass seeds, forb seeds



Fruits and berries



Aquatic insects, crayfish, snails



Grasshoppers and other insects, spiders, worms



Fish



Frogs, toads, snakes, lizards



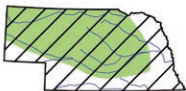
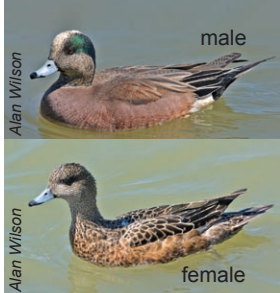
Adult birds, nestlings, eggs



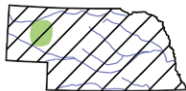
Mice, voles, prairie dogs, ground squirrels, rabbits



Carrion



Gadwall



American Wigeon

Identification: Gadwall: Male is grayish-tan overall with black rump; female is mottled brown with yellow legs and lower bill. American Wigeon: Breeding-season male is distinguished by white forehead and crown with green stripe behind eye; female has tan body with grayish head; male's whistled call is reminiscent of a small squeaking toy.

Habitat: Both species frequent freshwater wetlands, ponds; nest on the ground in upland areas near water.

Feeding: Both species are aquatic feeders that dabble for food on or near water surface or tip up to reach deeper food items.

Conservation: Gadwall: Increasing. American Wigeon: Tier II at-risk species; fairly stable, but populations are below their long-term average. For both species, preserve wetlands, lakes, ponds and adjacent marshes; use non-lead fishing tackle.

male



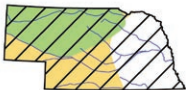
female



male



female



Mallard

Northern Pintail

Identification: Mallard: Male has glossy green head, chestnut breast, yellowish bill; female is mottled brown with blue wing patch bordered with white. Northern Pintail: Male has long pointed tail, white chest, and white line extending up neck behind dark brown face; female is mottled brown with slender neck, rather pointed tail, and gray bill.

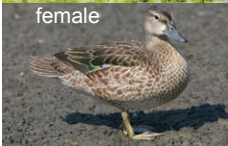
Habitat: Both species frequent wetlands, especially shallow wetlands, and nest on ground in upland areas near water.

Feeding: Both species dabble for food on or near the water's surface; Mallard also forages on land.

Conservation: Both species: Stable; maintain grasslands near water; preserve shallow wetlands; delay haying of grasslands near water until mid-August; use non-lead fishing tackle.



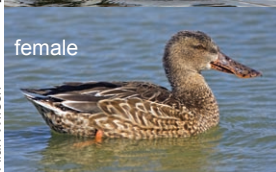
male



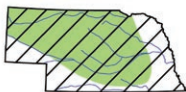
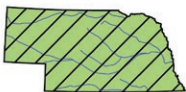
female



male



female



Blue-winged Teal

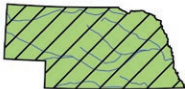
Northern Shoveler

Identification: Blue-winged Teal: Both sexes have large pale-blue wing patches; male has distinctive white facial crescents. Northern Shoveler: Both sexes have large bill, large pale-blue wing patch; male has glossy green head, white chest, rufous belly and sides. Females of both species are mottled brown.

Habitat: Both species use ponds, marshes, and shallow edges of lakes; nest on the ground in upland areas near water.

Feeding: Teal: Dabbles for food on or near water surface; during migration, forages for grain in fields. Shoveler: Aquatic surface-feeder; strains plant & animal items through comb-like edge of bill.

Conservation: Blue-winged Teal: Stable. Northern Shoveler: Increasing. Both: Maintain grasslands with tall cover near water; preserve shallow wetlands and ponds; delay haying of grasslands near water until mid-August; use non-lead fishing tackle.



Pied-billed Grebe

Identification: Duck-like aquatic bird with lobed toes rather than the webbed feet common to ducks. Dark brown back, lighter sides, neck, and head. Breeding-season adults have black chin and black ring around the pale bill; in winter, the black ring disappears and the black chin becomes white.

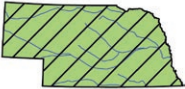
Habitat: Ponds with open water and abundant emergent vegetation such as cattails. Builds a floating nest of aquatic vegetation at the edge of stand of emergent vegetation.

Feeding: Dives underwater to capture food.

Conservation: Declining in some areas of North America, but still fairly common. Conserve ponds, wetlands, and emergent vegetation.



© Dreamstime/Robert Butler



American Coot

Identification: Duck-like aquatic bird with lobed toes rather than the webbed feet common to ducks. Black overall with white bill. Bobs head while swimming across the water's surface.

Habitat: Wetlands, ponds, and lakes with emergent vegetation such as cattails. Builds a bulky nest of aquatic vegetation, attached to emergent vegetation and elevated above water's surface.

Feeding: Forages for aquatic vegetation, small fish, and insects by diving or gleaning from the ground.

Conservation: Declining but still abundant. Conserve wetlands and bodies of open water with emergent vegetation.



Northern Bobwhite

Identification: This quail is mostly brown mottled all over, with reddish streaks on the sides. Eyebrow and chin are white on males, buff brown on females.

Habitat: Farms, open areas with shrubs, and open woods. Nests on the ground, often at edge of open area.

Feeding: Forages for seeds, leaves, fruit, and insects on the ground.

Conservation: Declining at an alarming rate at continental level, but still common across central and eastern Nebraska. Use no-till or minimum-till practices in croplands.



Elaine Wilson



John Carlson



Greater Prairie-Chicken

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Identification: Prairie-Chicken: Dark brown barring, yellow patches of bare skin above the eyes. Sharp-tail: Mottled, mostly dark brown back and wings, dark brown spots on white breast and belly; pointed tail. During courtship displays, males inflate air sacs on sides of the neck — the sacs are yellow in Prairie-Chicken and purple in Sharp-tail. Females of both species are mottled brown.

Habitat: Prairie-Chicken: Tallgrass and midgrass prairie. Sharp-tail: Grasslands, shrublands. Both species lay their eggs in a shallow depression scraped into the ground.

Feeding: Both species forage on the ground or low in shrubs.

Conservation: Prairie-Chicken: Tier I at-risk species; may be declining; maintain medium and tall grasslands; control invasive grasses and encroaching trees and shrubs; minimize roads, habitat fragmentation, other disturbances. Sharp-tail: Declining; maintain large tracts of native grasslands mixed with shrublands.



Wild Turkey

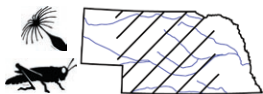


Identification: North America's largest game bird. Dark brown overall, naked head; male appears iridescent with white barring on wings, red wattles (flap of skin on the throat), black breast beard; female is similar, but lacks the wattles and beard. Outside of the breeding season, often seen in flocks of up to 50 individuals.

Habitat: Woodlands lining rivers and streams. Nests on the ground, often under a shrub or next to a fallen log.

Feeding: Forages for food on the ground.

Conservation: Stable. Populations of this game species are managed to allow a sustainable harvest.



Sandhill Crane



Great Blue Heron

Identification: Sandhill Crane: Gray with red forehead and eyes.

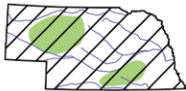
Great Blue Heron: North America's largest heron, with a wingspan of six feet; blue-gray body, black stripe over the eye.

Habitat: Shorelines, marshes; crane also uses croplands. Crane nests in Canada & Rocky Mountains. Heron builds a stick platform nest in trees; many pairs nest close together.

Feeding: Crane probes soft soil or picks grains from ground or plants. Heron stands or walks slowly through shallow water, captures prey with a quick stabbing motion of the bill.

Conservation: Sandhill Crane: Increasing. Great Blue Heron:

Stable or increasing; retain trees adjacent to water for nesting.



White-faced Ibis

Identification: Dark bronze color overall, long reddish legs, long pale, downward-curving bill. Reddish face outlined with white.

Habitat: Wetlands, flooded fields, and wet meadows. Nest is built in emergent vegetation, with many pairs nesting close together.

Feeding: Uses its bill to probe in water or wet soil for prey; especially fond of crayfish. Often forages in groups.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species; after declines in the 1960s and 1970s, populations have been increasing. Conserve wetlands.



Killdeer



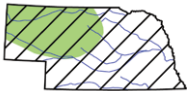
Mountain Plover

Identification: Killdeer: White chin, breast, and belly contrast with two black collar bands; reddish-brown rump is obvious when the bird is flying. Mountain Plover: Pale tan with white breast and belly, a black patch above the white forehead, and a black stripe between the black bill and eye.

Habitat: Killdeer: Shorelines, other open areas with short vegetation and bare ground. Mountain Plover: Very short grasslands, freshly plowed fields, other areas with vegetation shorter than 2", areas of bare ground. Both species nest in a bare area scraped out in gravel or soil.

Feeding: Both species forage for food items on the ground.

Conservation: Killdeer: Stable. Mountain Plover: State threatened species; declining; maintain open grasslands with extensive bare ground and native herbivores such as prairie dogs; minimize pesticide use.



American Avocet

Identification: Cinnamon head and neck in breeding season, turns grayish-white when not breeding, white body, black back and on part of the wings, grayish legs. Long, thin, upturned bill.

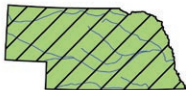
Habitat: Shorelines, shallow water. Nest is a shallow depression in dried mud or sand.

Feeding: Sweeps bill back and forth through the water, capturing small aquatic insects.

Conservation: Stable overall, but declining in parts of the Great Plains. Maintain wetlands and shallow open-water areas.



Doug Backlund



Upland Sandpiper

Identification: Small head, thin neck, short bill, large eyes. Brown feather tips give mottled appearance. Often seen perched on fence posts.

Habitat: Grasslands. Nests on the ground, with surrounding vegetation pulled over the nest for concealment.

Feeding: Collects food items on the ground. Often forages on burned prairie.

Conservation: Stable at the continental scale; increasing in Nebraska. Maintain large tracts of open grasslands. Avoid burning, mowing, or plowing during the nesting and brood-rearing seasons (roughly mid-April to mid-July). Control encroaching trees and shrubs.



Long-billed Curlew

Identification: Largest North American shorebird. Extremely long (6-8") down-curved bill. Body and wings are colored with browns and cinnamon. The call is a loud *cur-lew* or *cur-lee*.

Habitat: Grasslands with few or no forbs. Nest is a shallow depression on the ground.

Feeding: Feeds by walking slowly, watching for large insects, toads, and bird eggs. Uses long bill to pull prey such as spiders and crickets from their underground burrows.

Conservation: Tier I at-risk species; declining. Maintain continuous blocks of open grasslands and prairie wetlands. Avoid activity near known nesting sites. Minimize pesticide use.



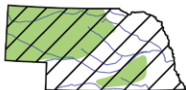
Tom Grey

male



Tom Grey

female



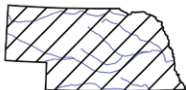
Wilson's Phalarope

Identification: Thin straight black bill, white face, sides, and belly. Female has broad dark stripe through the eye that extends down the neck, and a gray cap; male has a black cap and lacks the broad dark stripe. Breeders have cinnamon coloration on neck. Contrary to most birds, the drab-colored male incubates the eggs.

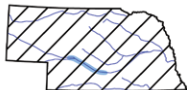
Habitat: Wet meadows near lakes or ponds. The well-concealed nest is on the ground.

Feeding: Often seen spinning in circles in shallow water to stir up aquatic insects.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain wetlands and wet meadows. Defer livestock grazing until after mid-July in pastures containing wetlands.



Franklin's Gull



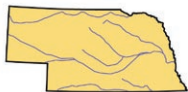
Ring-billed Gull

Identification: Both species have white body with gray back and wings. Franklin's: Breeding birds have black head, red bill, white crescents above & below eyes; winter birds have white face with dark hood and bill. Ring-billed: Black ring near tip of yellow bill; yellow legs; winter birds have brown streaking on head.

Habitat: Both species frequent lakes, ponds, and fields.

Feeding: Franklin's: Often follows farm equipment through fields to pick up worms and insects. Ring-billed: Eats a wide variety of natural foods and human garbage.

Conservation: Franklin's: Stable. Ring-billed: Stable or increasing. Both: Maintain marshes with open-water areas.



Rock Pigeon



Eurasian Collared-Dove

Identification: Rock Pigeon: Highly variable in coloration, but a typical bird is gray with darker head and neck, dark band at end of tail, red legs. Eurasian Collared-Dove: Much larger than Mourning Dove; pale grayish-tan body with a black collar on back of the neck; when it flies, shows a broad square tail with white corners.

Habitat: Both species are usually found around human habitations. Rock Pigeon: Nests on flat rooftops and ledges, occasionally on rocky cliff ledges. Eurasian Collared-Dove: Nests in trees, especially conifers.

Feeding: Both species forage for food on the ground.

Conservation: Both species are stable or increasing; introduced from Europe, these species have spread throughout much of North America.



Mourning Dove

Identification: Grayish-brown overall, with black spots on the wings. Long, pointed tail. The familiar cooing song gives the bird its name — it sounds as though it is mourning.

Habitat: Widespread, from open grasslands and croplands to open woodlands. The flimsy stick nest is built in a tree or shrub, occasionally on the ground.

Feeding: Picks seeds and some insects from the ground.

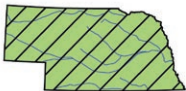
Conservation: Stable and abundant. Minimize pesticide use. Use non-lead shot when hunting.



Tom Grey



© Dreamstime/Dgareri



Turkey Vulture

Identification: Very large black “buzzard” with naked, small-looking red head. In flight, pale flight feathers contrasting with dark body are visible. Holds wings upward in a “V” when soaring, often tilting back and forth in the wind.

Habitat: Both woodlands and open country. Nests in dark cavities including cliff overhangs, caves, tree stumps, vacant buildings, and even abandoned cars.

Feeding: Soars over large areas searching for carrion. Has a better sense of smell than other birds; forages by sight and smell.

Conservation: Increasing. Affected by poisoned bait set out for predators and lead shot in dead animals it scavenges. Use non-lead shot for hunting. Avoid disturbing nests.

Tom Grey



male

Tom Grey



female



Northern Harrier



Identification: In flight, male is gray above and white below, with black wing tips; female is brown above with brown streaks below. Both have a long tail with a rectangular white rump patch. Formerly known as the Marsh Hawk.

Habitat: Marshes, grasslands, other open areas. Builds a well-hidden nest of sticks and reeds, on the ground or supported on marsh vegetation.

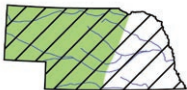
Feeding: Often seen gliding low over the ground with its head down, scanning for prey.

Conservation: No clear population trend in North America or in Nebraska. Maintain open grasslands and wetlands. Avoid activity near nest sites.

Bill Schmoker



Tom Grey



Swainson's Hawk

Identification: Typical adult has white chin and belly, contrasting with brown head and bib. The wings are white and dark brown.

Habitat: Open areas with scattered trees, shelterbelts. The large nest of sticks is usually placed high in a tree.

Feeding: Usually soars while hunting for small animals, but sometimes walks on the ground to catch grasshoppers and crickets.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species; increasing across much of North America, possibly a rebound after declines caused by pesticide use on the species' South American wintering grounds. Maintain open grassland; retain trees for nesting; stay away from active nests. Minimize pesticide use.

Bill Schmoker



© Dreamstime/John Wollwerth



Red-tailed Hawk

Identification: Typical adult has reddish tail, a dark brown band across the white belly, and a dark brown patch on the front edge of each wing, close to the body.

Habitat: Open areas with trees, which are needed as support for the large nest of sticks.

Feeding: Hunts by watching from a perch or while soaring.

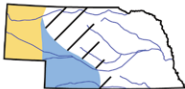
Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain open grassland; retain trees for nesting.



Robert Shantz



© Dreamstime/Brenda Carson



Ferruginous Hawk

Identification: Typical adults viewed from below look almost all white; the back and other upperparts are rust-colored. The legs are rust-colored and form a sharp contrast with the white belly and tail. The tail lacks the dark bands seen on most hawks.

Habitat: Open areas. The large nest may be placed in a tree or shrub, or on the ground, and is built of sticks, bones, and grass.

Feeding: Hunts while soaring or from a perch.

Conservation: Tier I at-risk species; stable. Maintain open grasslands and small-mammal populations, including prairie dogs. Protect trees. Avoid activity near active nests.



Rough-legged Hawk



Identification: Typical bird has mostly white wings with distinctive black rectangular patches at the wrist, and a dark belly; most adults and some immature birds have a broad dark band at the end of the tail.

Habitat: Nests in arctic regions; spends winters in open areas of the Great Plains.

Feeding: Hunts while soaring or from a perch.

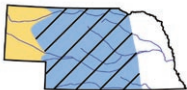
Conservation: Appears to be stable; population fluctuates in response to lemming populations on the breeding grounds. Retain small-mammal populations.



© Dreamstime/Maxim Petrichuk



© Dreamstime/Debra James



Golden Eagle

Identification: Adult is very dark brown all over with a golden brown head; immature birds have a white patch toward the end of each wing (visible while in flight) and at the base of the tail.

Habitat: Nests in mountainous areas or open country, spends winters in open areas. The bulky nest of sticks is placed on cliffs, rock outcrops, or in trees.

Feeding: Hunts primarily by soaring.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species; stable or increasing in eastern North America, declining in the West. Maintain open grasslands and rabbit, jackrabbit, and prairie dog populations. Avoid activity near active nests. Follow bird-friendly practices for wind energy developments.



Tom Grey



Tom Grey



American Kestrel

Identification: Small falcon with pointed wings and long tail. Male has blue-gray wings and a reddish-brown back; female is reddish-brown all over. Both sexes have two vertical black stripes on each side of the head.

Habitat: Open areas. Nests in tree cavities.

Feeding: Hovers by rapidly beating its wings; also hunts from perches such as trees, fences, utility poles. Because of its small size and predation on songbirds, this species was formerly known as the Sparrow Hawk.

Conservation: Declining across much of North America, but apparently increasing in Nebraska. Maintain open grasslands. Preserve trees and snags. Minimize pesticide use.



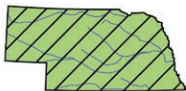
Prairie Falcon

Identification: Pointed wings typical of falcons. When seen from below, wings and body are pale, contrasting with dark brown “armpits” under the wings, close to the body. A narrow, dark brown bar extends below each eye.

Habitat: Open areas. Nest is a shallow depression scraped in the soil of cliff ledges.

Feeding: Hunts while flying, catching birds in mid-air and small mammals on the ground.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species; population trend is difficult to assess, but appears to be stable on a continental scale. Maintain open grasslands and small-mammal populations.



Barn Owl

Identification: White face, breast, and belly; rust and gray head, back, and wings; dark eyes.

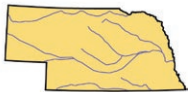
Habitat: Open areas, such as pasture interspersed with cropland, also open woodlands; avoids extensive cropland. Nests in buildings or in hollows of banks or cliffs.

Feeding: Hunts at night by flying silently 5–15 feet above the ground to locate prey by sight or sound.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species. Population status difficult to assess, but appears to be declining. Minimize pesticide use, especially pesticides targeting small rodents.



© iStockPhoto/Cynthia Lindow



Great Horned Owl

Identification: Large grayish owl with white throat, yellow eyes, and two prominent ear tufts (“horns”). Often seen perched on utility poles or trees at dusk or dawn.

Habitat: Wooded areas. Typically nests in a stick nest built by crows, magpies, or hawks.

Feeding: Hunts at night for rabbits, rodents, skunks, reptiles, and birds.

Conservation: Stable. Minimize the use of pesticides, especially those targeting rodents.

Glenn Walbek



Burrowing Owl

Identification: Unusually long legs, brown coloration with white spots on back and wings, dark brown barring on the light brown breast and belly, white throat and "eyebrow", yellow eyes.

Habitat: Treeless areas with short vegetation (less than 4" tall), often in prairie dog towns. Raises young underground in old mammal burrows.

Feeding: Captures grasshoppers and other insects during the day, birds and small mammals at night.

Conservation: Tier I at-risk species; overall population has declined significantly with some increases in recent years. Maintain open grasslands and populations of prairie dogs and other burrowing mammals. Minimize pesticide use.



Doug Backlund



Short-eared Owl

Identification: Medium-sized owl with dark areas around the eyes, dark brown streaks on the breast, and a light belly. The short ear tufts are difficult to see.

Habitat: Open fields and marshy areas. Nests on the ground, with the nest partially concealed by shrubs or grass.

Feeding: Soars low over the ground to hunt for voles and other small rodents; occasionally captures songbirds.

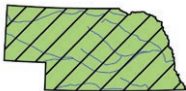
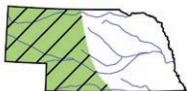
Conservation: Tier I at-risk species; declining at an alarming rate. Maintain wetlands and open grasslands. Remove unused fences, which are a collision hazard.



Glenn Walbek



John Carlson



John Carlson



Common Poorwill

Common Nighthawk

Identification: Both species are grayish overall with large head and eyes. Poorwill: White band across the throat; short rounded tail with white corners; roosts on the ground. Nighthawk: Tapered wings bent back at an angle; a white bar near the end of each wing is obvious in flight; usually seen flying at dusk or dawn but occasionally in midday; sometimes seen perched on fence posts.

Habitat: Poorwill: Areas with shrubs and/or pine trees, rocky slopes; lays its eggs in a shallow depression on the ground or on a flat rock. Nighthawk: Open areas, woodlands, towns; lays its eggs directly on the ground, especially among gravel on hills, ridges, and rooftops.

Feeding: Both species capture insects in flight.

Conservation: Poorwill: Like many secretive, nocturnal birds, its population status is difficult to determine. Nighthawk: Declining; maintain open grasslands. For both, minimize pesticide use, and use caution when driving at night to avoid birds roosting on roads.



Marion Ball



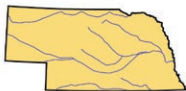
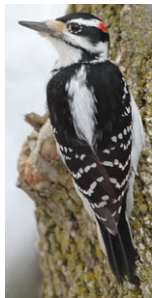
Red-headed Woodpecker

Identification: Conspicuous all-red head, black and white body, and white wing patches.

Habitat: Shelterbelts, woodlands, edges of farmsteads, standing dead trees in the open. Nests in tree cavities that it has excavated.

Feeding: Flies out from posts to catch insects, forages on ground and in trees for acorns, nuts, and seeds. Stores acorns or nuts in tree crevices for winter feeding.

Conservation: Declining. Retain dead trees for nesting and foraging. Retain oak trees. Minimize pesticide use.



Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Identification: Both species are black and white overall, with mostly black wings and tail and white belly; male has red area on back of head. Downy Woodpecker has short stubby bill and black marks on the white outer tail feathers; the larger Hairy Woodpecker has long bill and unmarked white outer tail feathers.

Habitat: Woodlands, farmsteads, urban/suburban neighborhoods. Both species are regular visitors to winter bird feeders, especially if suet is offered. Both nest in tree cavities.

Feeding: Both species pick insects from trunks and branches of trees, and will excavate some insects; Downy sometimes forages on tall weeds.

Conservation: Stable. Preserve large woodland tracts; leave standing dead trees in place if they do not present a hazard.



Glenn Walbek



Northern Flicker

Identification: Gray and brown head, black crescent below the throat, black spots on pale breast and belly, brown and black bars on back and wings. In flight, the underside of the wings may be yellow or reddish orange. Male has a black or red “moustache.”

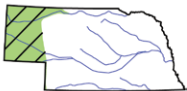
Habitat: River woodlands, towns, homesteads with large trees. Nests in a tree cavity.

Feeding: Unlike most other woodpeckers, forages primarily on the ground for ants and other insects; sometimes catches insects in the air; eats some berries and nuts in winter.

Conservation: Declining. Preserve live trees and standing dead trees. Minimize pesticide use.



Eastern
Wood-Pewee



Western
Wood-Pewee



Eastern Wood-Pewee

Western Wood-Pewee

Identification: These nearly identical species are light grayish on the head, back, and sides; dark wings, white belly; the Eastern's song is a distinctive *pee-a-wee* with the second syllable lower and shorter; the Western's call is a harsh descending *peer*.

Habitat: Open woods, especially near water; the simple cup nest is placed far out on a tree branch, 10-30 feet above the ground.

Feeding: Both species fly out from an exposed perch to capture flying insects.

Conservation: Populations of both species are declining at a continental scale, but may be stable or even increasing in Nebraska; minimize pesticide use.



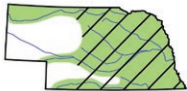
Say's Phoebe

Identification: Grayish head, back, and wings, lighter breast, cinnamon belly, black tail. Frequently perches on fences, where it can be seen bobbing its tail.

Habitat: Open areas, especially where streams or ravines are present. Builds a bulky nest of plant material in rock crevices, under bridges, or in openings of buildings or streambanks.

Feeding: Flies out from a perch to capture flying insects.

Conservation: Increasing. Minimize pesticide use.



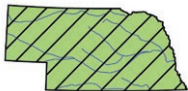
Great Crested Flycatcher

Identification: Dark olive-gray head and back; lighter breast; darker wings; lemon yellow belly.

Habitat: Woodlands. Nests in cavities excavated by woodpeckers or created by tree rot.

Feeding: Flies out from a perch to capture flying insects or hovers briefly to pick insects from bark or leaves.

Conservation: Stable. Leave standing dead trees in place if they do not present a hazard; minimize pesticide use.



Western Kingbird

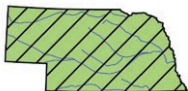
Cassin's Kingbird

Identification: Nearly identical species; both have yellow belly and black tail; Western has light gray head and breast while Cassin's is dark gray. The harsh call sounds like a tape recording played at a very fast speed.

Habitat: Dry, open areas, open woods, towns, homesteads. Nests in trees.

Feeding: Captures flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Western has declined in some areas, but appears to be stable in Nebraska. Cassin's: Tier II at-risk species; has increased in some areas (too uncommon in Nebraska to determine a population trend). Maintain mature trees for perching and nesting; minimize pesticide use.



Eastern Kingbird

Identification: Black tail with white tip, black back, wings and head, white chin, breast, and belly. Often seen perched on fences or wires, from which it flies out to catch flying insects, then returns to the same perch.

Habitat: Open areas, open woods, towns. Nests in trees.

Feeding: Captures flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Declining at a continental scale, but stable in Nebraska. Preserve trees. Minimize pesticide use.



Loggerhead Shrike

Tom Grey



Loggerhead Shrike



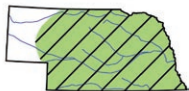
Northern Shrike

Identification: Nearly identical; both species have gray body, black wings with white patches, black mask. Northern Shrikes are present on the Great Plains only in winter.

Habitat: Open areas where there are some trees or shrubs, especially ones with thorns. Nests in a tree or shrub.

Feeding: Watches from a fence or other perch, then swoops down to capture prey. Skewers prey on thorns or barbed wire.

Conservation: Loggerhead Shrike: Tier I at-risk species; declining. Northern Shrike: Stable. Maintain open grasslands with scattered shrubs for nesting; minimize pesticide use.



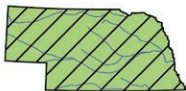
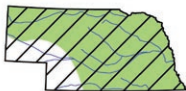
Bell's Vireo

Identification: Drab green-gray head and back, darker wings and tail, white throat blending into yellowish breast and belly. Faint white “spectacles.”

Habitat: Dense thickets of shrubs and trees, especially along waterways. Nests in a shrub or low tree.

Feeding: Picks insects from leaves and branches.

Conservation: Tier I at-risk species; declining in some areas of North America but appears to be increasing in Nebraska. Preserve dense stands of shrubs near water; minimize use of pesticides.



Red-eyed Vireo

Warbling Vireo

Identification: Both species have olive green back with darker wings and tail. Red-eyed Vireo: White underparts; blue-gray crown; obvious black and white lines above and through the red eye. Warbling Vireo: White eyebrow stripe; persistently sings its rambling song while foraging in the treetops.

Habitat: Red-eyed Vireo: Woodlands, especially near water. Warbling Vireo: Shelterbelts, roadside trees, and woodlands. Both species build a basket nest, which hangs from forked twigs.

Feeding: Both species pick insects from leaves and tree trunks.

Conservation: Red-eyed Vireo: Stable or increasing. Warbling Vireo: Stable. For both species, maintain woodlands and shelterbelts; minimize pesticide use.



Blue Jay



American Crow

Identification: Blue Jay: Purplish-blue with white and black markings; blue crest on head; black band on throat; gives a harsh *jeer jeer jeer* call, and another call that sounds like a squeaky pump handle. American Crow: Completely black; purplish gloss in strong sunlight.

Habitat: Blue Jay: Common and widespread anywhere there are trees, including urban areas. American Crow: Open and semi-open country. Both species build a cup nest in a tree or tall shrub.

Feeding: Both species eat a wide variety of foods; forage in trees, shrubs, and on the ground.

Conservation: Blue Jay: Declining; retain woodlands; minimize pesticide use. American Crow: Stable; protect winter roost sites; minimize use of poisoned baits for predator control.



Alan Wilson



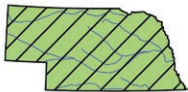
Black-billed Magpie

Identification: Black above and white below, black bill and legs, white patches in the glossy blue wings. Long tapered tail is an iridescent greenish black.

Habitat: Open country with scattered trees or woodlands. Bulky domed nest placed in trees. Multiple pairs may nest close together in small groups if nesting habitat is scarce or if food is abundant.

Feeding: Broad diet; forages on the ground for animal and plant matter as well as carrion.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species; declining. Minimize use of poisoned baits for predator control.



Chimney Swift

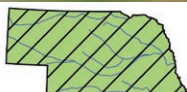
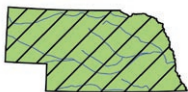
White-throated Swift

Identification: Both species have tapered body and long tapered wings. Chimney Swift is brown overall with short tail. White-throated Swift is dark with white throat extending in narrow band down the body, with white patches on sides; long pointed tail.

Habitat: Chimney Swift: Most often seen over cities and towns; nests on the vertical surface inside chimneys, towers, open silos, and hollow trees. White-throated Swift: Steep canyons; nests in rock crevices.

Feeding: Both species capture insects in flight.

Conservation: Chimney Swift: Declining; if possible, leave chimneys uncapped; clean chimneys during October to mid-March, when the birds are absent from the state. White-throated Swift: Stable. Both species: Minimize pesticide use.



Tree Swallow

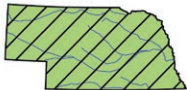
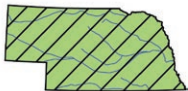
Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Identification: Tree Swallow: Male is dark greenish-blue above and clean white below; female is brown above; square tail has a slight notch. Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Brown above, white below, with a faint brown wash across upper breast.

Habitat: Tree Swallow: Woodlands, shelterbelts, standing dead trees out in the open; nests in tree cavities excavated by woodpeckers and in bird houses. Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Found near rivers and streams; nests in burrows in earthen banks; does not nest in colonies.

Feeding: Both species catch insects on the wing, and usually forage over open areas near water.

Conservation: Tree Swallow: Increasing; retain dead trees for nesting and perching. Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Stable or increasing. For both species, minimize pesticide use.



Cliff Swallow

Barn Swallow

Identification: Both species have blue-black back, wings, tail, and crown, and reddish face. Cliff Swallow: Buffy rump patch and collar, white belly; prominent white forehead. Barn Swallow: Rusty throat and forehead, buffy breast and belly, long forked tail.

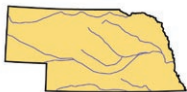
Habitat: Cliff Swallow: Open areas near water; builds mud nests in colonies under bridges and highway overpasses and on buildings. Barn Swallow: Open areas near buildings; sometimes seen gathering mud from water's edge; uses the mud to build a cup nest on bridges and buildings.

Feeding: Both species capture flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Cliff Swallow: Increasing, but negatively affected by competition with the non-native House Sparrow. Barn Swallow: Declining. For both species: Minimize pesticide use.



Alan Wilson



Black-capped Chickadee

Identification: Black crown and throat; white cheek, breast, and belly; buffy sides; slate gray back; dark wings and tail, with feathers edged with pale gray.

Habitat: Woodlands, especially with mature trees. Also found in cities and towns, especially at winter bird feeders. Nests in tree cavities created by woodpeckers or decay; will excavate a cavity themselves if the wood is soft or well-rotted.

Feeding: Gathers food from branches and leaves. Stores seeds (and sometimes insects) for later consumption.

Conservation: Increasing after stark declines in the early 2000s from West Nile virus. Preserve woodlands and dead standing trees (if they do not pose a hazard); minimize pesticide use.



White-breasted Nuthatch

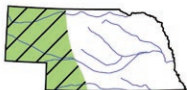
Red-breasted Nuthatch

Identification: Both species have blue-gray back, wings, and tail; black crown. White-breasted Nuthatch: White face, breast, and belly; larger of the two species. Red-breasted Nuthatch: White stripe above eye, black stripe below; cinnamon breast and belly.

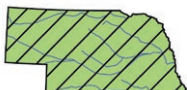
Habitat: Both species are found in areas with mature trees including towns, where they are common visitors to winter feeders. Both nest in tree cavities created by woodpeckers or rot; Red-breasted may excavate a cavity if the wood is soft or rotted.

Feeding: Both species search for food on tree trunks and branches, often hanging upside down on bottom sides of branches; both store food for later consumption.

Conservation: Both species are stable or increasing. Preserve mature trees and standing dead trees (if they do not pose a hazard); minimize pesticide use.



Rock Wren



House Wren

Identification: Both species are gray-brown with fine black and white marks on back, head, and wings, fine brown marks on pale breast, buffy belly. Rock Wren: Bobs up and down. House Wren: Very active; the short tail is often cocked upward; song is a rapid, bubbly series of whistled notes.

Habitat: Rock Wren: Dry, rocky, open areas; nests in rock crevices. House Wren: Woodlands, including river woodlands, homesteads, shelterbelts; nests in tree cavities and bird houses.

Feeding: Rock Wren: Captures insects on the ground. House Wren: Captures insects in shrubs, trees, and on the ground.

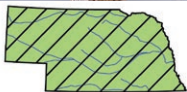
Conservation: Rock Wren: Declining, in part due to nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird; minimize pesticide use. House Wren: Stable or increasing; preserve dead and dying trees.



male



female



Eastern Bluebird



Mountain Bluebird

Identification: Eastern: Blue back, wings, and head, reddish brown throat and breast, white belly; male is darker blue.

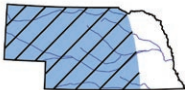
Mountain: Male is sky blue overall with whitish belly; female is light brownish-gray with blue wings and tail, white belly.

Habitat: Eastern: Open areas, open woodlands, homesteads.

Mountain: Breeds in mountain meadows and sagebrush, winters in open areas at lower elevations. Both nest in tree cavities.

Feeding: Both species drop from a perch to capture insects on the ground; Mountain also captures insects in the air. Both species eat berries in winter.

Conservation: Eastern: Increasing. Mountain: Significant declines in parts of its range, appears stable in Nebraska. For both species, preserve dead and dying trees.



Townsend's Solitaire

Identification: Gray overall with buffy wing patches, white ring around eye, white on outer edges of tail.

Habitat: Breeds in coniferous forests of the Rocky Mountains and Black Hills; winters in areas with juniper trees, including towns and cities.

Feeding: Forages for its winter diet of juniper "berries" (actually the fleshy female cones of the juniper) in the trees and on the ground.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species. Not enough data available to determine a population trend. Preserve juniper trees, unless they are encroaching on native grasslands.



male



female



American Robin

Identification: Gray back and wings, reddish orange breast and belly; the male's head is black and the female's is gray.

Habitat: Grasslands with trees, open woodlands, homesteads, towns. Builds a nest of twigs and grass with smooth mud lining; places nest in trees, shrubs, under eaves of buildings.

Feeding: Runs across the ground, stopping occasionally to pick up insects; picks small fruits from shrubs.

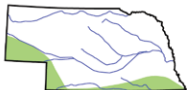
Conservation: Stable. Minimize pesticide use.



Alan Wilson



Robert Shantz



Northern Mockingbird

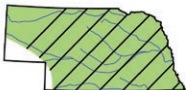
Identification: Gray back and head, darker gray wings and tail, grayish white throat, breast, and belly. In flight, white wing patches are visible, similar to shrikes but without the black mask.

Habitat: Open areas with shrubs. Nests in trees or shrubs.

Feeding: Collects its food from vegetation and the ground.

Conservation: Declining in parts of its range (including western Nebraska), increasing in others. Minimize pesticide use.

Peter Massas



Gray Catbird

Identification: Gray with a black cap, rusty undertail coverts.

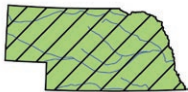
Habitat: Shrubby areas, especially near water. Builds a nest of sticks and stems placed low in a shrub or small tree.

Feeding: Forages for food on the ground and in shrubs and trees.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Preserve brushy areas near water; minimize pesticide use.



Bill Schmoker



Brown Thrasher

Identification: Rusty back, wings, and long tail, rusty cap on a gray head, brown streaks on white breast and belly.

Habitat: Dense shrubby areas. Nests on the ground or in a shrub or tree.

Feeding: Collects its food from the ground. Often heard foraging through dead leaves and other plant litter.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain shrubby areas. Minimize pesticide use.

Dick Daniels



European Starling

Identification: In summer, black overall with a yellow bill. In winter, the bill is black, and black body feathers tipped with white give it a spotted appearance.

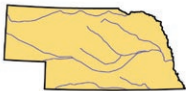
Habitat: Woodlands, especially near human habitation. Nests in tree cavities, bird houses, or any suitable opening in a building or other structure.

Feeding: Eats a wide variety of foods that it collects from the ground.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. This is an invasive, non-native species that competes with native species for nesting sites and food.



Alan Wilson



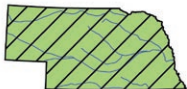
Cedar Waxwing

Identification: Brown with darker wings; red spot in wings; black tail with yellow tip; yellow belly; black mask; brown crest.

Habitat: Woodlands, especially where small fruits or juniper berries are plentiful, including cities and towns. Builds a nest of twigs and other vegetation, placed in a tree.

Feeding: Forages in outer branches of trees and shrubs.

Conservation: Increasing in North America, appears to be stable in Nebraska.



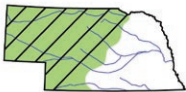
Yellow Warbler

Identification: Small, plump yellow bird with prominent dark eye; male has distinctive rusty red vertical streaks on the breast.

Habitat: Shrubby areas near water, homesteads. The cup nest is placed in shrubs or trees.

Feeding: Eats insects picked off the foliage of shrubs and trees.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain trees and shrubs near water. Minimize pesticide use.



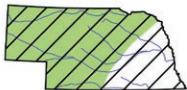
Yellow-breasted Chat

Identification: Deep olive green back and head, bright yellow throat and breast, white belly, white “spectacles” with black below the eye, a white line separating the black from the yellow throat.

Habitat: Dense shrubby areas, especially where there is water. Nests in shrubs or trees.

Feeding: Eats insects and berries collected in shrubs and trees.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain shrubs near water and existing trees.



Spotted Towhee



Eastern Towhee

Identification: Males of both species have long black tail, black back, head, and breast, white belly, reddish brown sides; Spotted Towhee has white spots on the black wings, Eastern Towhee lacks the white spots. Females are similar to males, but dark grayish brown where the male is black.

Habitat: Shrubby areas. Nest on the ground under a shrub or low in a shrub.

Feeding: Forage for food on the ground where they are often very noisy as they rake away dead leaves with both feet to find food.

Conservation: Spotted Towhee: Stable over most of North America. Eastern Towhee: Stable or declining on a continental scale. Both species appear to be increasing in Nebraska. For both species, maintain patches of dense shrubs and minimize pesticide use.



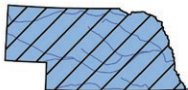
Horned Lark

Identification: Brown back, wings, and tail, white breast and belly, bold black markings on brown and pale yellow head, black crescent under throat. Small black “horns “ are often difficult to see.

Habitat: Open areas with very short vegetation and bare ground. Nests on the ground, usually adjacent to a clump of vegetation.

Feeding: Forages on the ground for seeds and insects.

Conservation: Declining, but still one of the most common birds of the Great Plains. Maintain open grasslands. Control encroaching trees and shrubs.



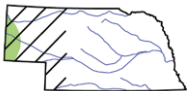
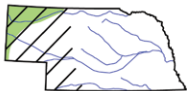
Lapland Longspur

Identification: Winter birds have brown back with black streaks, rusty collar (male), and a dark tail with whitish corners. Late-winter males may show breeding colors — black face outlined with white, and rusty color on back of the head and neck.

Habitat: Breeds in Arctic tundra; winters in cropland and pastures of the Great Plains and Midwest. Often winters with large flocks.

Feeding: Forages on the ground for insects (summer) and seeds (winter).

Conservation: Stable. Leave stubble in cropland through the winter.



Chestnut-collared Longspur

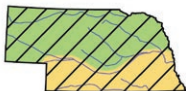
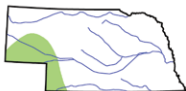
Thick-billed Longspur

Identification: Chestnut-collared: Male has chestnut-colored patch at the nape of the neck, black crown, breast, and belly. Thick-billed: Male has black crown, black upper breast, chestnut shoulder patch. Females of both species are black and brown overall. In flight: Chestnut-collared show a black triangle and Thick-billed show an inverted black “T” in the white tail.

Habitat: Both species are found in grasslands, with Thick-billed preferring very short grass and Chestnut-collared preferring short to medium height grass. Both species nest on the ground.

Feeding: Both species forage for food on the ground.

Conservation: Both: Tier I at-risk species; declining. Maintain large areas of grassland with diverse vegetation structure; graze mixed-grass prairie moderately to intensively; graze wet areas in shortgrass prairie at light to moderate intensity; minimize pesticide use; preserve prairie dog colonies.



Cassin's Sparrow

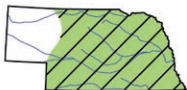
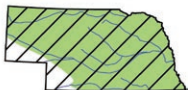
Song Sparrow

Identification: Cassin's Sparrow: Grayish with dark marks on the back; white corners of tail can be seen in flight; male sometimes sings while flying vertically above his territory, then fluttering down to a perch. Song Sparrow: Reddish-brown, dark brown, and gray above; white breast with brown streaks, usually forming a central dark spot.

Habitat: Cassin's Sparrow: Grasslands with shrubs or cactus, fencerows; nests on the ground or low in a shrub. Song Sparrow: Shrublands or riparian areas with dense vegetation; nests on the ground or in a low tree or shrub.

Feeding: Both species collect food items on the ground.

Conservation: Cassin's Sparrow: Tier II at-risk species, declining; maintain open grasslands with scattered shrubs. Song Sparrow: Declining in North America but appears stable or increasing in Nebraska; maintain shrubby areas, especially near water.



Chipping Sparrow

Field Sparrow

Identification: Both species have grayish white face and underparts, brown streaked back and wings. Chipping Sparrow: Bright rufous cap, prominent white eyebrow, dark line through the eye. Field Sparrow: Rust-orange crown, white ring around the eye, and bright pink bill and legs.

Habitat: Chipping Sparrow: Open woodlands with conifers, juniper shrublands, shelterbelts, city parks and yards; builds cup nest in conifer trees and bushes. Field Sparrow: Old fields, brushy grasslands, woodlot edges; builds cup nest in trees and shrubs.

Feeding: Both species pick insects from leaves and bark, and forage on the ground for seeds.

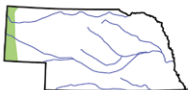
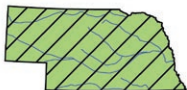
Conservation: Both species are stable or increasing; minimize pesticide use. Field Sparrow: Avoid haying or grazing old fields; maintain brushy edges of woodlots.



Dan Streifel



Dave Herr



Grasshopper Sparrow

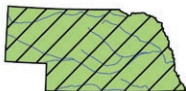
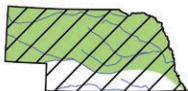
Brewer's Sparrow

Identification: Grasshopper Sparrow: Brown head with thin white center stripe, stubby tail, buffy breast and sides, often with a yellowish orange spot in front of the eye; fairly flat head; song is an insect-like buzz. Brewer's Sparrow: Unmarked gray breast and belly, gray eyebrow; fairly long, notched tail.

Habitat: Grasshopper Sparrow: Midgrass and tallgrass prairie, areas of taller grasses in shortgrass prairie, hayfields, grainfields; builds domed cup nest on the ground. Brewer's Sparrow: Dry areas with yucca, sagebrush, or other shrubs; nests low in a shrub or cactus.

Feeding: Both species forage for food on the ground.

Conservation: Grasshopper Sparrow: Declining; maintain large tracts of open grassland with medium or tall grasses. Brewer's Sparrow: Tier I at-risk species; declining; maintain sagebrush stands; control invasive cheatgrass and encroaching trees.



Vesper Sparrow

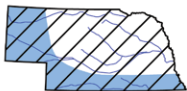
Lark Sparrow

Identification: Vesper Sparrow: Fine black streaks on the breast; white outer tail feathers seen in flight; small reddish brown shoulder patch is sometimes obvious. Lark Sparrow: Grayish breast with central black spot, white belly, striking red, black, and white facial pattern; white corners on the tail are obvious in flight.

Habitat: Vesper Sparrow: Grasslands, ditches, and grass strips in cropland. Lark Sparrow: Drier grasslands with patches of bare ground, scattered shrubs or trees. Both species usually nest on the ground.

Feeding: Both species forage on the ground.

Conservation: Both species are declining in North America, but appear to be stable in Nebraska; maintain open grasslands. Vesper Sparrow: Use no-till or reduced-till practices in croplands; delay haying of grass strips until after mid-July. Lark Sparrow: Maintain grassland with scattered trees and shrubs.



White-crowned Sparrow

Identification: Large sparrow, mostly gray with brown streaked back. Adult has thick black and white stripes on head. Immature birds have same head pattern but gray and reddish-brown stripes, rather than black and white. Found in flocks up to 150 individuals during migration and winter, often with other sparrows.

Habitat: In winter, open areas with patches of grass, bare ground, shrubs, and trees, generally close to water.

Feeding: Searches for seeds and insects on the ground or from perches.

Conservation: Declining on a continental scale but wintering populations in Nebraska appear to be increasing; in spite of declines, still an abundant and widespread species.

Robert Shantz



female



male

Doug Backlund



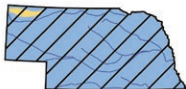
Lark Bunting

Identification: Male is all black with large white patch on each wing. Female is mottled grayish brown and white on the back and head, white breast with grayish brown streaks, white belly, large white patch on each grayish brown wing.

Habitat: Grasslands with some shrubs, also fallow fields, stubble, grainfields. Nests on the ground.

Feeding: Forages on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of open grassland with scattered shrubs. Minimize pesticide use. Use no-till or minimum-till practices in cropland.



Dark-eyed Junco

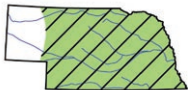


Identification: Gray-hooded, sparrow-like bird with white belly, pale-colored bill, and white outer tail feathers that are conspicuous when the bird flies. Several color variations may be seen during migration, including birds with black hoods, birds with rusty or brown backs and pink sides, and birds with prominent white wing bars. Colors on females are duller than those of males.

Habitat: In winter and during migration, occurs in brushy areas, yards, and shelterbelts. Breeds in conifer forests. Nests in a shallow depression with overhead protection.

Feeding: Primarily searches for food on the ground.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species. Wintering population is large and stable but in Nebraska, only the white-winged form breeds and only in Pine Ridge area. For overwintering birds, provide cover such as brush piles; for breeders, maintain conifer tree cover with ample shrubs and low vegetation.



Dickcissel

Identification: Male has black triangle on throat, both sexes have yellow breast, whitish belly, rusty brown patch on each shoulder, cone-shaped bill. Male's song sounds like *dik dik dik-cissel*.

Habitat: Found in areas with dense grasses and forbs, including open grasslands and shrubby areas. Nests on the ground or in shrubs, trees, or other vegetation up to 6 feet high.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining in parts of its North American range, but appears to be stable in Nebraska. Maintain large tracts of grassland; delay mowing until after mid-August; minimize pesticide use.

Bill Schmoker



male

Tom Grey



female



House Finch



male



female



Red Crossbill

Identification: House Finch: Males are red on the upperparts, streaked below; females are gray-brown with streaking. Red Crossbill: Male is red with dark wings and tail; female is olive yellow with dark wings and tail; bill with crossed tips is distinctive.

Habitat: House Finch: Grasslands, thickets, open woodlands, human settlements; nests in trees, shrubs, or on buildings. Red Crossbill: Ponderosa pine woodlands; in winter, seen in towns with mature conifer trees; nest is well concealed in conifer tree.

Feeding: House Finch: Forages from the ground, trees, or feeders. Red Crossbill: Eats seeds from conifer cones or feeders.

Conservation: House Finch: Stable. Red Crossbill: Declining; preserve mature conifer trees, which produce the most cones.

Elaine Wilson

Alan Wilson



Tom Grey



American Goldfinch

Identification: In summer, male is canary yellow with black wings, tail, and forehead; female is duller and lacks the black on the head. In winter, both sexes are yellowish gray with black wings, pale yellow head. Sometimes called “wild canary.”

Habitat: Open areas with shrubs or trees. The cup nest is placed in trees.

Feeding: Collects its food from the ground and from plants.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain wooded areas along waterways.



male



female



House Sparrow

Identification: Male has brown and black back and wings, gray crown, chestnut nape and face with whitish cheek, black bib and breast, white belly. Female has grayish brown breast, buffy eyebrow, brown and gray back and wings.

Habitat: Closely tied to human habitation and will nest in virtually any available cavity in buildings or in bird houses.

Feeding: Collects its food from the ground or feeders.

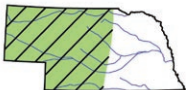
Conservation: This is an invasive, non-native species that competes with native species for nesting sites, to the detriment of native species.



male



female



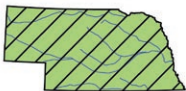
Black-headed Grosbeak

Identification: Male is burnt orange and black with white marks. Female is brown, white, and black with thin dark markings on flanks, light eyebrow. Both sexes have heavy bill with upper mandible darker than lower.

Habitat: Woodlands along water, especially shrubby understory. Builds a loosely constructed nest in the outer branches of a shrub or small tree.

Feeding: Forages for food among leaves and on branches of shrubs and trees, occasionally on the ground.

Conservation: Increasing at the continental scale; stable in Nebraska. Preserve riparian trees and shrubs; minimize pesticide use.



Blue Grosbeak

Identification: The male is deep blue overall with reddish brown patches on each wing. The female has a light brown body, gray wings and tail. Both sexes have a large, heavy beak.

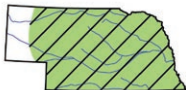
Habitat: Shrubby areas, streamsides, and woodland edges. Nests low to the ground in a shrub or small tree.

Feeding: Collects its food from the ground and in shrubs.

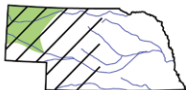
Conservation: Increasing. Maintain woody vegetation along waterways.



female Indigo Bunting



Indigo Bunting



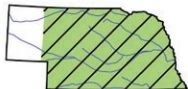
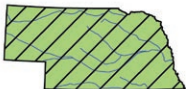
Lazuli Bunting

Identification: Indigo Bunting: Male is dark blue overall; female is light brown overall with faint streaks on breast. Lazuli Bunting: Male has blue head and back, two white wing bars, reddish breast, white belly; female has light brown head and breast, black wings with traces of blue, white belly.

Habitat: Both species prefer shrubby areas, usually near water; nest is placed low in a shrub or small tree.

Feeding: Both forage for food on the ground or low in shrubs.

Conservation: Indigo Bunting: Declining. Lazuli Bunting: Stable or increasing. Both species: maintain shrubby areas, especially near water.



Orchard Oriole

Baltimore Oriole

Identification: Orchard Oriole male has black head, back, tail, and wings, reddish brown breast, belly, and rump; female is yellowish overall with gray back and wings. Baltimore Oriole male has black back, black and white wings, orange tail, rump, breast, and belly, all-black head; female has yellow-orange tail, head, and breast, gray and white wings, and grayish white belly.

Habitat: Open woods, trees near open areas, especially near water. Build hanging nest in trees.

Feeding: Forage in trees.

Conservation: Orchard Oriole: Stable or increasing. Maintain trees, especially near water. Baltimore Oriole: Declining at the continental level, but stable in Nebraska. For both species: Minimize pesticide use.



female



Kevin Cole

male



Bullock's Oriole

Identification: Male has black back, black and white wings, orange tail, rump, breast, and belly. black head with orange face. Female has yellow-orange tail, head, and breast, gray and white wings, and grayish white belly.

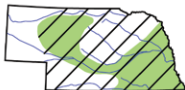
Habitat: Trees near open areas. Builds hanging nest in trees.

Feeding: Eats insects, fruits, and nectar collected in trees.

Conservation: Stable or increasing both at the continental level and in Nebraska. Maintain trees, especially near water. Minimize pesticide use.



Western Meadowlark



Western Meadowlark

Eastern Meadowlark

Identification: Virtually identical species. Black and brown on the back and wings, a yellow throat, breast, and belly with a black “V” on the breast. These species are distinguished by their songs: the Western’s song is flutelike, the Eastern’s is high-pitched whistles.

Habitat: Grasslands, croplands, open shrublands. The Eastern prefers areas with taller vegetation. The ground nest is hidden by a dome of vegetation.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Both species are declining. Maintain open grasslands. Minimize disturbance during the nesting season as they are very sensitive and easily abandon their nests; delay mowing until after mid-July.

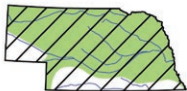
Note: The Western Meadowlark is the state bird of Nebraska.



female



male



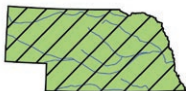
Bobolink

Identification: Male is black overall with white patches on the wings and a large buffy patch on the back of the head; a white rump is noticeable when the bird flies. Female has black and brown streaks on the back and wings, white throat, thin brown streaks on the crown and the white breast, belly, and sides, and a thin dark brown line behind the eye.

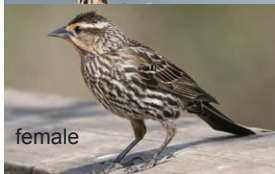
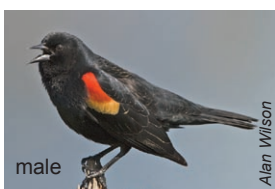
Habitat: Grasslands (especially wet areas) and grainfields. Nests on the ground, often with other Bobolinks nesting nearby.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining on a continental scale, but stable or increasing in Nebraska. Maintain large tracts of open grassland. Delay mowing until after mid-July. Minimize pesticide use.



Yellow-headed Blackbird



Red-winged Blackbird

Identification: Yellow-headed Blackbird: Male is black with yellow head and breast, white wing patch; female is brown with some yellow on the face and breast. Red-winged Blackbird: Male is black with a bright red and yellow patch on each shoulder; female has thick brown streaks on the breast and belly; buffy eyebrow.

Habitat: Yellow-headed: Breeds in marshes, winters in grain fields; nests in emergent wetland vegetation such as cattails. Red-winged: Marshes, wet meadows, hayfields, grainfields, and towns; nests in emergent wetland vegetation, shrubs, or trees.

Feeding: Both collect food on the ground or in low vegetation.

Conservation: Yellow-headed: Stable or declining. Red-winged: Declining. Both species: maintain wetlands & wetland vegetation.



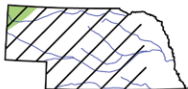
Alan Wilson

female



Tony Leukering

male



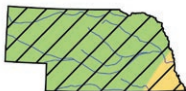
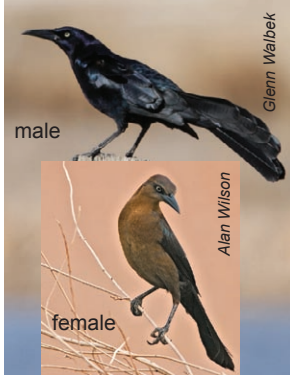
Brewer's Blackbird

Identification: Male is black overall with yellow eyes. Female is brown overall with dark brown eyes. Compared to the Common Grackle, the tail is shorter and the bill is shorter and straighter.

Habitat: Breeding birds prefer shrubby areas, open woodlands, homesteads; nests on the ground or low in a shrub. Overwintering birds prefer pastures, grainfields, grasslands.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Tier II at-risk species; declining but still abundant at the continental scale.



Common Grackle



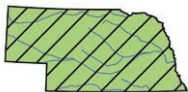
Great-tailed Grackle

Identification: Common Grackle: Black with purplish sheen on male's head, yellow eyes, long tail; the bill and tail are longer than in Brewer's Blackbird. Great-tailed Grackle: Male is black with iridescent blues and greens sometimes visible; very large tail forms elongated "V" in flight; female is brown, with a shorter tail.

Habitat: Common Grackle: Open areas with trees, such as homesteads and woodland edges; nests in trees (esp. conifers) and shrubs. Great-tailed Grackle: Open areas with trees, marshes; nests near water, in emergent wetland vegetation, trees.

Feeding: Both species forage for food on the ground.

Conservation: Common: Declining but still abundant; stable in Nebraska. Great-tailed: Increasing; expanding its range.



Brown-headed Cowbird

Identification: Male has black body with dark brown head, female is grayish brown with indistinct dark markings, both have black cone-shaped bill. Male's song sounds like *glug-glug-glee*.

Habitat: Grassy areas and woodland edges, especially where livestock are present. Does not build a nest; instead lays its eggs in the nests of other birds to raise the young. As a result, the "host" birds are often unable to raise any young of their own.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground. Often captures insects stirred up by livestock.

Conservation: Stable or declining but still very common. In some areas, cowbirds pose a risk for some rare species.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Owl, Short-eared <i>Asio flammeus</i>	34

<input type="checkbox"/>	Phalarope, Wilson's <i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	18
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phoebe, Say's <i>Sayornis saya</i>	40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pigeon, Rock <i>Columba livia</i>	20
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pintail, Northern <i>Anas acuta</i>	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plover, Mountain <i>Charadrius montanus</i>	14
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poorwill, Common <i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>	35
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prairie-Chicken, Greater <i>Tympanuchus cupido</i>	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robin, American <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	57
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandpiper, Upland <i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shoveler, Northern <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shrike, Loggerhead <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	44
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shrike, Northern <i>Lanius borealis</i>	44
<input type="checkbox"/>	Solitaire, Townsend's <i>Myadestes townsendi</i>	56
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Brewer's <i>Spizella breweri</i>	71
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Cassin's <i>Peucaea cassinii</i>	69
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Chipping <i>Spizella passerina</i>	70
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Field <i>Spizella pusilla</i>	70
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Grasshopper <i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	71
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, House <i>Passer domesticus</i>	79
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Lark <i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	72
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Song <i>Melospiza melodia</i>	69
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, Vesper <i>Poocetes gramineus</i>	72
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrow, White-crowned <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	73
<input type="checkbox"/>	Starling, European <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	61
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swallow, Barn <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	51

<input type="checkbox"/>	Swallow, Cliff <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	51
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swallow, Northern Rough-winged <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	50
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swallow, Tree <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	50
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swift, Chimney <i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	49
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swift, White-throated <i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	49
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teal, Blue-winged <i>Spatula discors</i>	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thrasher, Brown <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	60
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towhee, Eastern <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>	65
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towhee, Spotted <i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	65
<input type="checkbox"/>	Turkey, Wild <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vireo, Bell's <i>Vireo bellii</i>	45
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vireo, Red-eyed <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	46
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vireo, Warbling <i>Vireo gilvus</i>	46
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vulture, Turkey <i>Cathartes aura</i>	22
<input type="checkbox"/>	Warbler, Yellow <i>Setophaga petechia</i>	63
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waxwing, Cedar <i>Bombcilla cedrorum</i>	62
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wigeon, American <i>Mareca americana</i>	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood-Pewee, Eastern <i>Contopus virens</i>	39
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood-Pewee, Western <i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	39
<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodpecker, Downy <i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	37
<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodpecker, Hairy <i>Dryobates villosus</i>	37
<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodpecker, Red-headed <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> .	36
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wren, House <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	54
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wren, Rock <i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	54



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