



BIRD WATCHING NEBRASKA

What you need, where to go, and other useful information

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Binoculars

Binoculars help you to view a bird more closely allowing you to note details that may assist you in making an accurate identification. Binoculars are labeled with two numbers. The first number indicates the power, or amount of magnification. For example, a number 8 means the object will be magnified 8 times. The second number indicates the diameter of the lens in millimeters and determines how much light the lens lets in. A few other terms might be helpful: field of view refers to the size of the area you can see when looking through the binoculars; eye relief refers to the distance, in millimeters, that you can hold the binoculars from the eye and still see the full field of view. A minimum eye relief of 15 mm is best for anyone using eyeglasses or sunglasses. Although binoculars with more magnification and more brightness may sound best, this is not always the case. As magnification increases, eye relief, field of view and brightness may diminish and images may shake. As the lens size increases, so does the size of the binoculars, thus reducing the comfort of carrying them around. 8 x 42 binoculars are a standard size for birding. Visit www.eagleoptics.com for specific product suggestions, reviews, and more about binoculars.

Field Guides

Field guides can help you identify the bird you are seeing. There are a variety available. Almost all are arranged according to taxonomic order (scientific groupings). There are several things to consider when you choose a field guide. Do you prefer illustrations of birds, or photographs? Many people feel that illustrations are most helpful since they provide an idea of the generalized bird rather than a particular individual. Some guides highlight field marks of birds to help with identification. How much information do you want on each bird you observe? The more information on individual birds the guide contains, and the larger the number of birds listed, the larger the book is to carry around.

Note: If you are bird watching in Nebraska where there are both eastern and western bird species, you will want a 'Birds of Eastern North America' in the eastern part of the state, and a 'Birds of Western North America' in the western part. You can also choose a 'Birds of North America' which contains both.

Regional Field Guides

- Birds of the Great Plains: Bob Jennings, Roger Burrows, Ted. T Cable
324 species. Each bird is presented with beautiful full-color illustrations and comprehensive notes on habitat, nesting, feeding and voice, as well as best sites for viewing. 2005, 384 pg, 8.4" x 5.6" x 1.1", 1.2 lbs.
- Birds of Nebraska Field Guide: Stan Tekiela
Photographs organized by bird color, not comprehensive, range maps, interesting facts, 2003, 308 pg, 5.9"x4.3"x0.7", 7.2 oz

Basic Field Guides

- Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America: Roger Tory Peterson
500 species, illustrations with field marks indicated, range maps, info: description, similar species, voice and habitat. 5th edition, 2002, 450 pg., 8.1" x 5" x 1", 2 lbs.
- Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification: Golden Field Guides, St Martin's Press
800 species, 600 range maps, migration routes, feeding habits, characteristic flight patterns, classic guide revised, updated, 2001, 360 pg., 7.6"x4.8"x.6", 12.8 oz.
- Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Eastern Region: Donald and Lillian Stokes (a western volume also available)
900 color photos, information on habitat; plumage variation; feeding, nesting, and mating behavior; bird feeder proclivity; population trends and conservation status. 1996, 496 pg, 8.2"x5"x.9", 1.5 lbs.

More Advanced Field Guides

- National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America: edited by Jon L. Dunn & Jonathan Alderfer
960 species, 4,000 illustrations, identification highlights, behavioral clues, range maps, helpful inset tabs, quick find index on black flap. 5th edition, 2006, 504 pages, 7.9"x5.4"x1.2", 2 lbs.
- Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America: David Allen Sibley (a western volume also available)
4200 illustrations of 650 species, field marks, text includes frequency, nesting, behavior, food, voice, key identification features, range maps. 2003, 432 pg., 7.6"x4.6"x1.2", 1 lb.
- Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America: Kenn Kaufman
2000 digitally enhanced photographs with highlighted field marks, organized by bird family groupings rather than strict taxonomic order, text descriptions, range maps, color-coded tabs for each grouping of birds. 2005, 392 pg, 7.6"x4.6"x1", 2 lbs
- Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America: Ted Floyd
2000 colored photographs of 750 species, short descriptions of field marks, habits, age-related and seasonal differences, vocalizations, 48 group essays, dvd of 138 bird songs/calls 2008, 528 pg, 7.9"x5.4"x2", 2 lbs

Two Useful Companions to a Field Guide

- The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds: Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye
Gives concise information about 646 species: nest location, nest type, who builds the nest, eggs, mating system, incubating sex, length of incubation, development at hatching, time from hatching to fledging, who tends the young, diet, foraging techniques, displays, plus essays on a wide range of bird topics.
- The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior: David Allen Sibley
Introductory general essays, and 80 chapters describing bird families: their characteristics and behavior.

Local Birding Hotspots

Lincoln Area

- Pioneers Park Nature Center
- City Parks: Pioneers Park, Wilderness Park, Holmes Lake Park, Oak Lake
- Trails: MoPac, Jamaica North/Homestead, Oak Creek
- Wyuka Cemetery
- Saline Wetlands: Arbor Lake, Frank Shoemaker Marsh, Jack Sinn WPA, Lincoln Saline Wetlands Nature Center (Capitol Beach)
- Nine Mile Prairie, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
- Salt Valley Lakes: (Nebraska Game and Parks) Branched Oak, Pawnee, Wagon Train, etc
- NRD Lakes: Wildwood etc.

Surrounding Area

- State Parks: Mahoney, Platte River, Schramm
- Fontenelle Forest, Neale Woods, Heron Haven (Omaha)

For Waterfowl and Crane Viewing, spring migration (primarily March)

Central Platte River Valley and Rainwater Basin

- Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, Gibbon
- Funk, Harvard and Clay Center Wetlands

For Waterfowl, Bald Eagles and Hawks, spring and fall migration

- DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, Missouri Valley, IA
- Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Mounds City, MO
- Hitchcock Nature Center, Honey Creek, IA - Hawk Watch (September- December)
Hitchcock Nature Center, Honey Creek, IA

Useful Websites

- Nebraska Birding Trails - www.nebraskabirdingtrails.com
Lists over 400 bird watching sites and includes trails, checklists and links to various local birding websites
- Central Nebraska Flyway - www.nebraskaflyways.com
Information and maps on bird watching sites in the central Nebraska flyway. Includes cranes and other birds of the rainwater basin plus other wildlife watching opportunities.
- Nebraska Bird Partnership - www.nebraskabirds.org
A group of more than 300 agencies, conservation groups and businesses dedicated to the conservation of birds and bird habitats across Nebraska. Birding news, information on bird conservation and implementation, plus articles on Nebraska bird species and habitats with species profiles added monthly. Access to the Nebraska Birding Trails and Project Beak websites.
- Nebraska Metro Birding - www.nebraskametrobirding.com
Listing of bird watching opportunities and sites in the Eastern Nebraska metropolitan area including Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Saunders and Washington counties.
- Chicken Dance Trail - www.chickendancetrail.com
List of sites and opportunities in the Rain Water Basin and South Western Nebraska - many are private
- Nebraska Ornithology Union - www.noubirds.org
Nebraska's official website on birds for the past 100 years. Breeding bird surveys, breeding bird atlas, state and county checklists and much more.
- Nebraska Bird Checklist - <http://rip.physics.unk.edu/NOU/Johnsgard/List.html>
Complete list of 426 birds found in Nebraska, descriptions, time of year, locations and more.
- Wild Bird Habitat Stores of Nebraska - www.wildbirdhabitatstore.com
Information and products for learning about birds and attracting them to your gardens and yards. Supplier of field guides, birding software and birding information.
- Birding.com - www.birding.com
Great information and links: worldwide and USA bird watching: bird watching videos, bird watching hotspots, bird checklists, tours and lodging; all about birds: beginning birding, bird identification, species and ornithology, bird fact sheets, bird photos and songs (including a North America bird song learning guide) amazing bird records; backyard birding; bird watching equipment (info on binoculars, scopes and tripods); birding organizations; top 25 birding websites
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology - www.allaboutbirds.org
Online guide to the birds of North America. The site uses photographs, videos and sound bytes for each species and includes life histories. Learn birding basics, how to increase birding skills, attract birds to your yard, take photos, and lists favorite places to watch birds
- The Fat Birder - www.fatbirder.com
A complete list of birding information for Nebraska and the world beyond. Just go to "world birding" in the menu and click on North America, then Nebraska. Great list of resources.

Websites for Children

- Nebraska Bird Partnership's "Project Beak" - www.projectbeak.org
Created by the Nebraska Bird Partnership's educational workgroup, Project Beak is an interactive website for kids. Subjects and activities include birding basics, adaptations, Nebraska habitats, birds and people, and the rare ones. Teacher resources are also included.
- Kid Wings - www.kidwings.com
Kids can learn about birds with many activities. Topics include skulls, eggs, nests, feathers, beaks, feet, bird topography, just for fun, poetry, bird photography, bird calls, and a virtual owl pellet dissection. Teacher materials also included.

Annual Bird Counts and Citizen Science Programs

- Great Backyard Bird Count - www.birdcount.org
Annual free count every February. Data is submitted to biologists at the Cornell University Bird Lab. A great family activity.
- Christmas Bird Count - www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc
Annual bird count sponsored by National Audubon and conducted by local Audubon chapters across North America.
- Project Feeder Watch - www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw
A winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas and other locales in North America. Data is sent to biologists at Cornell University's Bird Lab.
- More Citizen Scientist Projects - www.birds.cornell.edu/netcommunity/citsci/projects
From Project Nest Watch to Urban Bird Watch, there are numerous birding projects through which you can help biologists understand birds better.

Nature Organizations

- Wachiska Audubon - www.wachiskaaudubon.org
Publishes a monthly newsletter, has monthly meetings on the 2nd Thursday of the month covering topics of interest to birders, arranges field trips and organizes bird counts.
- Bluebirds Across Nebraska - www.bbne.org
Nebraska's bluebird recovery organization promoting the conservation of cavity-nesting birds

Local Bird Rehabilitation Organizations

- Raptor Recovery Nebraska - www.raptorrecoverynebr.org, 402-994-2009
- Wildlife Rescue, 473-1951

Note: In the spring you may find juvenile birds on the ground. If they are very immature try to locate the nest and return them. If they are more mature, they may be in the process of fledging. Their mother is probably nearby and caring for them, so leave them alone. If they appear injured or in danger, please call one of the rehabilitation organizations listed above.

Connect With Other Nebraska Birders

- NEBirds Group Forum - groups.yahoo.com/invite/NEbirds
When you join NEBirds, you will be able to exchange messages with other group members about birding in Nebraska. Yahoo! Groups also makes it easy to store photos and files, coordinate events and more.

Pioneers Park Nature Center

Provides bird programming for both children and adults including bird banding during spring and fall migration.

402-441-7895

www.parks.lincoln.ne.gov/naturecenter

