

W *ildlife*

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policy range aquatics soil forestry wildlife

Wildlife

INTRODUCTION

Nebraska is home to an abundance of wildlife species. This diversity is evident by the unique ecosystems found throughout the state. From the eastern woodlands to the central sandhills and the western pine ridge, an array of diverse and complex relationships exist between wildlife, their habitats and the people who also call this land home.

All living things are dependent on other living things, and this is very evident when considering wildlife on the central plains. Living “things” in the form of vegetative growth, known collectively as habitat, have a value to other “beings” which varies greatly during the year, depending on its type, abundance, proximity and quality, coupled with factors such as weather. But, no matter how it is evaluated, habitat is what keeps wildlife alive. It provides the food, and shelter, and safety for all species.

The wildlife that call Nebraska home, their habitats, their relationships amongst each other and their interaction with people will provide a lifetime of study and enjoyment for everyone. Who lives there? Why? How do human actions impact those species? Why is it important to know how one species impacts another as they share and or compete in their habitats to survive? Whether you are a hunter, bird watcher or general nature enthusiast, enhancing your knowledge of the wildlife and habitats where you live is very important for the long term survival and proliferation of many species.

The conservation effort in the United States is a unique story of struggle and survival, resulting in the many benefits we enjoy with wildlife today. Critical legislation such as the passage of the Pittman-Robertson Bill in 1937, along with many others, have resulted in abundant and flourishing wildlife populations across the state. It is interesting how activities by people can have such positive impacts to wildlife when the best interest of both are kept in mind.

WILDLIFE OBJECTIVES:

WILDLIFE

1. Identify the tracks, physical characteristics (skulls, furs, antlers, horns, etc.), movement patterns, and eating habits of common Nebraska mammals, birds, fish, and herptiles.
2. Differentiate between endangered and threatened species, and recognize species of each category.
3. Differentiate between game and non-game species, and recognize species of each category.
4. Describe the habitat of Nebraska mammals, birds, fish, and herptiles and recommend management practices for each habitat.
5. Approximate the age of mammals by physical characteristics.
 - Spurs on male pheasants
 - Teeth on deer
6. Differentiate between carnivores, herbivores, and omnivores.
7. Illustrate a food web or energy flow diagram featuring mammals, birds, fish or herptiles.
8. State three characteristics that distinguish mammals from all other animals.
9. Define the theory of natural selection and recognize instances where wildlife have adapted to changes in the environment.
10. State two characteristics that fish and herptiles have in common.
11. Illustrate migration pathways that migratory fowl follow. Which flyway is Nebraska in?
12. Describe predator prey relationships. What happens to the predator population when you increase the prey population and vice versa?
13. Describe factors that limit or increase populations. Discuss the concept of carrying capacity and limiting factors.
17. Discuss various ways the public and wildlife managers can help in the protection, conservation, management and enhancement of wildlife populations.
18. Describe major factors affecting threatened and endangered species and methods used to improve the populations of these species.
19. Understand the roles of wildlife in an ecosystem.
20. General animal species to be familiar with include:
 - a. Beaver, Bobcat, Black Bear, Coyote, Mink, Mountain Lion, Muskrat, Opossum, River Otter, Raccoon, Black-footed Ferret, Mountain Plover, Least Tern, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Cranes, Whooping Cranes, Bobwhite Quail, Prairie Dogs, Cottontail Rabbit, Whitetail Deer, Mule Deer, Pronghorn Antelope, Elk, Turkey, Bighorn Sheep, Prairie Chicken, Sharp-tail Grouse, Morning Dove, Threatened Species, Endangered species, song birds of Nebraska, fresh-water fish of Nebraska
21. Understand the various methods wildlife use to communicate and be familiar with the calls of various big game animals and game birds.
22. Understand the role of hunting in managing wildlife populations and some of the laws and regulations that direct such activities.
23. Understand the differences between native and introduced species and be able to identify such.
24. Discuss the potential impacts of introduction of a non-native species

Suggestions

- Review a basic mammal and bird field guide. Understand the binomial naming systems used for various Nebraska species, especially the ones listed above.
- Review some pelts and or skulls of various Nebraska animals. Focus on Bobcat, Great Horned Owl, Coyote, Fox, Cottontail Rabbit, Raccoon, and Muskrat.

LEGISLATION & KEY PEOPLE

1. Identify assisting agencies, programs, and laws that govern Nebraska wildlife.
2. Understand the Pittman-Robertson Act, Migratory Bird Act, Lacey Act, Dingell-Johnson Act and their impacts on wildlife management today.
3. Discuss impacts made by key leaders such as Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and their efforts in conservation.

Suggestions

- Review this information in the United States Fish and Wildlife Web Site as well as the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Web Site.

HABITAT

1. Differentiate between habitat and niche.
2. Describe ways in which wildlife managers manage and or manipulate wildlife habitats.
3. Understand why native wildlife require specific types of habitats.
4. Discuss how upland birds and mammals have adapted to their habitat to make the best use of their environment.
5. Understand the differences between annual, biennial and perennial plants.
6. Understand the process of Succession and how this impacts wildlife.
7. Describe the potential impact of the introduction of non-native species.
8. Understand the four main elements of habitat (food, water, shelter, space)
9. Know differences between various types of habitats found throughout Nebraska and be able to discuss them. This includes wetlands, forests, grasslands, ponds, lakes, rivers, etc. How do we categorize wetlands? What is a grassland? What species may be found in them?

Suggestions

- Much of this information can be found in the NebraskaLAND Wildlife Habitat Improvement Guide as well as the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Web Site.
- The Project WILD Curriculum Manual for Grades K-12 will also have valuable information for this category.

Reference Material

Nebraska Game and Parks Webpage: www.outdoornebraska.org

You can get a lot of info. here

*Focus on the Wildlife and Fisheries Pages

NebraskaLAND Magazine. Wildlife Habitat Improvement Guide
Vol. 69, NO. 1, January /February 1991

Nebraska Wetlands: <http://www.unl.edu/agnicpls/wqwetnew.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/education/>

*Wetlands Education System

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: <http://www.fws.gov/>

Check out endangered and threatened species in Nebraska

* <http://www.fws.gov/species/>

* <http://www.fws.gov/laws/>

* <http://www.fws.gov/hunting/>

* <http://www.fws.gov/birds/mbmfactsheets.html>

* <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>

* <http://training.fws.gov/history/conservationheroes.html>

Tekiela, S. 2003. Birds of Nebraska. Adventure Publications Inc. Cambridge, NY.

http://cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ561.html

<http://www.enature.com/home/>

- This is a good online field guide

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/>

www.pheasantsforever.org

www.ducks.org

Council for Environmental Education. Project WILD K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide. 2001.

Current Nebraska Hunt Guide – available at any Nebraska Game and Parks Commission office and on Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Web Site

Current Nebraska Fishing Guide - available at any Nebraska Game and Parks Commission office and on Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Web Site