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## Mammals of Nebraska: Checklist, Key, and Bibliography

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# MAMMALS OF NEBRASKA

## *Checklist, Key, and Bibliography*

Hugh H. Genoways, Justin D. Hoffman, Patricia W. Freeman, Keith Geluso,  
Russell A. Benedict, and Jeffrey J. Huebschman





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Volume 23

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# **Mammals of Nebraska**

## **Checklist, Key, and Bibliography**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The Recent mammalian fauna of Nebraska is composed of 89 native species, 8 domestic species that can have feral populations, and 4 wild species introduced by humans, but not by intentional action. Thus, the included checklist and dichotomous key contain 101 species of mammals. Of the native species, 36 are rodents, 20 carnivores, 13 bats, 7 shrews and mole, 7 even-toed ungulates, 4 rabbits and hares, 1 armadillo, and 1 opossum. Another 8 species are identified as potentially occurring in peripheral areas of Nebraska. The bibliography includes 1693 entries that each contain data concerning one or more species of mammals from Nebraska.

## INTRODUCTION

The checklist, key, and bibliography of the mammals of Nebraska that we present herein were prepared as the initial product of a major study on the mammals of the state that has been underway for more than ten years. The larger study will detail the systematics, distribution, natural history, and economic importance of mammals living within the geopolitical boundaries of the state of Nebraska. As a state located in the northern Great Plains, Nebraska has a remarkably diverse mammalian fauna, a result of the intersection of major climatic and environmental zones within its boundaries (Freeman 1990).

As currently understood, the mammalian fauna of Nebraska is composed of 89 species of native mammals that live, or have lived, in the state. Not surprisingly, rodents are represented by the most native species with 36. Rodents are followed by carnivores (20), bats (13), shrews and mole (7), even-toed ungulates (7), rabbits and hares (4), armadillo (1), and opossum (1). Another eight species are identified as potentially occurring in peripheral areas of the state.

There are eight primary species of domestic mammals in Nebraska. These are all Old World species that have been domesticated by humans as livestock, beasts of burden, or companion animals. Any of these species are capable of escaping from

confinement or human control to become feral individuals, and, when a number of individuals are involved, they can form wild breeding populations. Obviously, there are more than eight species of domesticated mammals or exotic pets in Nebraska, and so it is difficult to know where to make a cut-off for the checklist and key. We have chosen to limit the species to those eight species that are domesticated in such numbers that one occasionally finds wild individuals or their remains in seemingly "wild" places. Thus, we have excluded such domestic mammals as the burro/donkey, llama, and alpaca and exotic pets such as guinea pigs, gerbils, and hamsters.

Another four species that have been included in the checklist and key have come to Nebraska through introduction or invasion. Introduced mammals are wild species that were brought to the state for some human benefit/purpose, and those that have invaded the state have come here by human action, but not intentional actions. In total we have included 101 species of mammals in our checklist and key.

In the following checklist, the higher-level taxonomy, generic and specific epithets, and common names used for Nebraska mammals follow Wilson and Reeder (2005) in most cases. Hall (1981) provided the initial basis for the subspecific taxonomic



arrangement. In addition to these two references, other authors have updated the taxonomy of a number of taxa, and we have attempted to identify and incorporate these changes. We are in a period of rapid change in mammalian systematics and taxonomy as genetic data give a much clearer picture of relationships among and within groups of mammals. Many readers may find unfamiliar names in these lists, but in many cases these represent new and exciting information. A good example of these changes is *Perimyotis subflavus*, previously known as the eastern pipistrelle with the scientific name of *Pipistrellus subflavus*. Two species in the genus *Pipistrellus* were known from North America, whereas the other nearly 50 species in the genus are Old World in distribution. New research shows that the New World species are not close relatives of the Old World species, and, in fact, they are not even that closely related to each other (Hooper and Van den Bussche 2003; Hooper *et al.* 2006). The American pipistrelle probably is most closely related to the bats in the genus *Myotis*, thus the new generic name proposed for it was *Perimyotis*.

The key that we present for Nebraska mammals is a dichotomous key, meaning that characters are presented in couplets. Users must choose that part of the couplet that best fits the specimen at hand and follow where directed until the identification of the specimen is complete. Insofar as possible, couplets have both external and cranial/skeletal characteristics.

We made the following bibliography of Nebraskan mammals as comprehensive as possible. If a paper contained any data concerning a mammal from Nebraska, it is included in the bibliography. Although the task has been exhausting, it may not be exhaustive, but we have made a good faith effort to make it as complete as possible. However, because writings about the mammals occurring in Nebraska date back to at least 1804 in the diaries of Lewis and

Clark, over 200 years of literature needed to be searched, thus we cannot claim that all relevant publications have been found. In the following bibliography, entries are listed alphabetically by the last name of authors. We considered arranging entries by species included in the articles, but all such schemes proved to be too cumbersome.

The most surprising result of our literature survey was just how extensive the mammalian literature is for the state. The following list contains 1693 entries (as of 1 May 2008), which is about three times the number of papers that we anticipated finding at the beginning of this project. Even with the depth and breadth of information available, there are some species about which we know very little. This even includes some important furbearers and game species such as the opossum, eastern and desert cottontails, and black-tailed jackrabbit. Why these gaps in our knowledge exist is unclear, but we hope that one result of our survey will be identifying those species on which resources should be expended in the future. Certainly, as we move forward in time more work will be published on mammals from the state so that periodic updates will be necessary to keep the bibliography comprehensive.

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## CHECKLIST

## NATIVE MAMMALS

## Order Didelphimorphia

**Family Didelphidae** (opossums)

*Didelphis virginiana virginiana* (Virginia opossum) — statewide except dry prairies in west.

## Order Cingulata

**Family Dasypodidae** (armadillos)

*Dasypus novemcinctus mexicanus* (nine-banded armadillo) — expanding geographic range in southern and central portions of state; northernmost documented occurrence near Ord, Valley Co.

## Order Lagomorpha

**Family Leporidae** (rabbits and hares)

*Sylvilagus audubonii baileyi* (desert cottontail) — western half of state.

*Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsi* (eastern cottontail) — eastern quarter of state.

*Sylvilagus floridanus similis* (eastern cottontail) — western three-quarters of state.

*Lepus californicus melanotis* (black-tailed jackrabbit) — statewide.

*Lepus townsendii campanius* (white-tailed jackrabbit) — northern two-thirds of state, geographic range may be contracting.

## Order Soricomorpha

**Family Soricidae** (shrews)

*Sorex cinereus cinereus* (masked shrew) — statewide.

*Sorex merriami leucogenys* (Merriam's shrew) — northwestern Panhandle in Sioux, Dawes, and Sheridan counties.

*Sorex nanus* (dwarf shrew) — single record from extreme western Sioux Co.

*Blarina brevicauda brevicauda* (northern short-tailed shrew) — northeastern and north-central two-thirds of state.

*Blarina hylophaga hylophaga* (Elliot's short-tailed shrew) — southern one-third of state.

*Cryptotis parva parva* (North American least shrew) — statewide except for southern Panhandle.

**Family Talpidae** (moles)

*Scalopus aquaticus caryi* (eastern mole) — western two-thirds of state.

*Scalopus aquaticus machrinoides* (eastern mole) — eastern one-third of state.

## Order Chiroptera

**Family Vespertilionidae** (insect-eating bats)

*Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens* (Townsend's big-eared bat) — single record from Sheridan Co.

*Eptesicus fuscus fuscus* (big brown bat) — eastern and southern half of state.

*Eptesicus fuscus pallidus* (big brown bat) — western and northern half of state.

*Lasionycteris noctivagans* (silver-haired bat) — migratory, breeds uncommonly statewide.

*Lasiurus borealis* (eastern red bat) — migratory, breeds statewide.

*Lasiurus cinereus cinereus* (hoary bat) — migratory, breeds statewide.

*Myotis septentrionalis* (northern myotis) — eastern half and northern parts of state.

*Myotis lucifugus carissima* (little brown bat) — extreme western Nebraska and along Niobrara River.

*Myotis lucifugus lucifugus* (little brown bat) — eastern one-quarter of state, with past records of breeding in extreme southeastern corner.

*Myotis ciliolabrum ciliolabrum* (western small-footed myotis) — western half of state.

*Myotis thysanodes pahasapensis* (fringed myotis) — western Nebraska in Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills areas.

*Myotis volans interior* (long-legged myotis) — extreme western Nebraska.

*Nycticeius humeralis humeralis* (evening bat) — eastern one-half of state.

*Perimyotis subflavus subflavus* (American pipistrelle) — eastern half of state, and probably will be shown to be statewide.

#### **Family Molossidae** (free-tailed bats)

*Tadarida brasiliensis mexicana* (Brazilian free-tailed bat) — exploring individuals occasionally found in state.

### Order Carnivora

#### **Family Felidae** (cats)

*Puma concolor hippolestes* (mountain lion) — extirpated, but re-entering the state, statewide.

*Lynx canadensis canadensis* (Canadian lynx) — no permanent residents, but exploring individuals taken in southern Panhandle and extreme northeastern part of state.

*Lynx rufus rufus* (bobcat) — statewide.

#### **Family Canidae** (dogs)

*Canis latrans latrans* (coyote) — statewide.

*Canis lupus lycaon* (gray wolf) — single exploring individual taken recently in Greeley Co.

*Canis lupus nubilus* (gray wolf) — extinct.

*Urocyon cinereoargenteus ocythous* (common gray fox) — uncommon statewide.

*Vulpes velox velox* (swift fox) — formerly statewide, but currently occupies only western one-quarter of state.

*Vulpes vulpes regalis* (red fox) — common statewide.

#### **Family Ursidae** (bears)

*Ursus americanus americanus* (black bear) — extirpated, but a few exploring individuals documented in extreme western Nebraska in recent years.

*Ursus arctos horribilis* (grizzly bear) — extirpated.

#### **Family Mustelidae** (weasels)

*Lontra canadensis lataxina* [believed to be original subspecies in state] (North American river otter) — extirpated, but successfully re-introduced in the central and eastern parts of the state from populations representing at least three subspecies.

*Mustela frenata alleni* (long-tailed weasel) — western three-quarters of state.

*Mustela frenata primulina* (long-tailed weasel) — southeastern portion of state.

*Mustela frenata spadix* (long-tailed weasel) — northeastern portion of state.

*Mustela nigripes* (black-footed ferret) — extinct in the wild.

*Mustela nivalis campestris* (least weasel) — statewide.

*Neovison vison letifera* (American mink) — statewide.

*Gulo gulo luscus* (wolverine) — known from one record in the Panhandle.

*Taxidea taxus taxus* (American badger) — statewide.

**Family Mephitidae** (skunks)

*Mephitis mephitis hudsonica* (striped skunk) — statewide.

*Spilogale putorius interrupta* (eastern spotted skunk) — rare statewide, with possible except of the extreme western Panhandle where *Spilogale gracilis* may occur.

**Family Procyonidae** (raccoons)

*Procyon lotor hirtus* (common raccoon) — statewide.

Order Artiodactyla

**Family Cervidae** (deer)

*Alces alces andersoni* (moose) — exploring individuals are sighted on occasion in the state.

*Odocoileus hemionus hemionus* (mule deer) — statewide.

*Odocoileus virginianus macroura* (white-tailed deer) — statewide.

*Cervus elaphus canadensis* (elk or wapiti) — extirpated, except for populations in the Pine Ridge, along Niobrara River, and in the loess hills south of North Platte.

**Family Antilocapridae** (pronghorns)

*Antilocapra americana americana* (pronghorn) — extirpated in eastern Nebraska, but occurring in Sand Hills and western part of the state.

**Family Bovidae** (cattle)

*Bison bison bison* (American bison) — extirpated, with captive herd at Fort Niobrara, Fort Robinson, and Wildcat Hills, and several ranches herds, particularly in the Sand Hills.

*Ovis canadensis canadensis* (bighorn sheep) — extirpated, with introduced herds in the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills.

Order Rodentia

Suborder Sciuromorpha

**Family Sciuridae** (squirrels)

*Sciurus carolinensis pennsylvanicus* (eastern gray squirrel) — along Missouri River in southeastern Nebraska.

*Sciurus niger rufiventer* (eastern fox squirrel) — nearly statewide.

*Glaucomys volans volans* (southern flying squirrel) — along Missouri River in southeastern Nebraska.

*Spermophilus elegans* (Wyoming ground squirrel) — two early records from Panhandle.

*Spermophilus franklinii* (Franklin's ground squirrel) — isolated populations in eastern two-thirds of state.

*Spermophilus pilosoma obsoletus* (spotted ground squirrel) — western two-thirds of state.

*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus pallidus* (thirteen-lined ground squirrel) — western two-thirds of state.

*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus tridecemlineatus* (thirteen-lined ground squirrel) — eastern one-third of state.

*Cynomys ludovicianus ludovicianus* (black-tailed prairie-dog) — nearly extirpated, but occurring in isolated populations occupying about 30,000 hectares in western two-thirds of state.

*Marmota monax bunkerii* (woodchuck) — eastern one-third of state and expanding westward.

*Tamias striatus griseus* (eastern chipmunk) — along Missouri River in extreme south-eastern Nebraska.

*Tamias minimus pallidus* (least chipmunk) — Pine Ridge and associated badland formations.

#### Suborder Castorimorpha

##### **Family Castoridae** (beavers)

*Castor canadensis missouriensis* (American beaver) — statewide.

##### **Family Heteromyidae** (pocket mice)

*Perognathus fasciatus fasciatus* (olive-backed pocket mouse) — western one-third of state.

*Perognathus flavescens flavescens* (plains pocket mouse) — western two-thirds of state.

*Perognathus flavescens perniger* (plains pocket mouse) — eastern one-third of state.

*Perognathus flavus piperi* (silky pocket mouse) — western one-third of state.

*Chaetodipus hispidus paradoxus* (hispid pocket mouse) — western two-thirds of state.

*Chaetodipus hispidus spilotus* (hispid pocket mouse) — southeastern portion of state.

*Dipodomys ordii luteolus* (Ord's kangaroo rat) — Panhandle and western two-thirds of state, primarily north of the Platte River.

*Dipodomys ordii richardsoni* (Ord's kangaroo rat) — western two-thirds of state, primarily south of the Platte River.

##### **Family Geomyidae** (pocket gophers)

*Geomys bursarius majusculus* (plains pocket gopher) — eastern one-third of state.

*Geomys jugossicularis halli* (Hall's pocket gopher) — southwestern portion of state.

*Geomys lutescens* (Sand Hills pocket gopher) — primarily confined to the Sand Hills and adjacent regions of the state.

*Thomomys talpoides cheyennensis* (northern pocket gopher) — southwestern corner of Panhandle.

*Thomomys talpoides pierreicolus* (northern pocket gopher) — northwestern corner of Panhandle.

#### Suborder Myomorpha

##### **Family Dipodidae** (jumping mice)

*Zapus hudsonius pallidus* (meadow jumping mouse) — eastern three-quarters of state.

##### **Family Cricetidae** (New World rats and mice)

*Microtus ochrogaster haydenii* (prairie vole) — western two-thirds of state.

*Microtus ochrogaster ochrogaster* (prairie vole) — eastern one-third of state.

*Microtus pennsylvanicus finitus* (meadow vole) — confined to Dundy Co.

*Microtus pennsylvanicus pennsylvanicus* (meadow vole) — statewide, except for Dundy Co.

*Microtus pinetorum nemoralis* (woodland vole) — along Missouri River in southeastern part of state.

*Ondatra zibethicus cinnamominus* (common muskrat) — statewide.

*Synaptomys cooperi gossii* (southern bog lemming) — eastern two-thirds of state.

*Synaptomys cooperi relictus* (southern bog lemming) — confined to Dundy Co.

*Neotoma cinerea rupicola* (bushy-tailed woodrat) — Panhandle.

*Neotoma floridana baileyi* (eastern woodrat) — isolated population along the central Niobrara River.

*Neotoma floridana campestris* (eastern woodrat) — southwestern and south-central parts of state.

*Neotoma floridana osagensis* (eastern woodrat) — known only from Gage and Johnson counties.

*Onychomys leucogaster arcticeps* (northern grasshopper mouse) — western two-thirds of state.

*Onychomys leucogaster breviauritus* (northern grasshopper mouse) — eastern one-third of state.

*Peromyscus leucopus aridulus* (white-footed deer mouse) — central one-third of state and along Niobrara River.

*Peromyscus leucopus novaboracensis* (white-footed deer mouse) — eastern one-third of state.

*Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii* (North American deer mouse) — eastern quarter of state.

*Peromyscus maniculatus luteus* (North American deer mouse) — central two-thirds of state.

*Peromyscus maniculatus nebrascensis* (North American deer mouse) — western Panhandle.

*Reithrodontomys megalotis dychei* (western harvest mouse) — statewide.

*Reithrodontomys montanus albescens* (plains harvest mouse) — statewide, except for southeastern corner.

*Reithrodontomys montanus griseus* (plains harvest mouse) — southeastern corner of state.

*Sigmodon hispidus texianus* (hispid cotton rat) — southern border of state.

#### Suborder Hystricomorpha

##### Family Erethizonidae (porcupines)

*Erethizon dorsatum bruneri* (common porcupine) — statewide.

## SPECIES OF MAMMALS POTENTIALLY OCCURRING IN NEBRASKA

### Order Lagomorpha

#### Family Leporidae (rabbits and hares)

*Sylvilagus nuttallii grangeri* (mountain cottontail) — known from Crook and Platte counties, Wyoming, to be watched for along the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills.

### Order Soricomorpha

#### Family Soricidae (shrews)

*Sorex hoyi hoyi* (pygmy shrew) — known from Clay Co., South Dakota, to be expected in extreme northeastern corner of state.

#### Order Chiroptera

##### **Family Vespertilionidae** (insect-eating bats)

*Antrozous pallidus pallidus* (pallid bat) — record known from Torrington, Goshen Co., Wyoming, to be expected along the Wildcat Hills.

*Myotis evotis evotis* (long-eared myotis) — known from the Black Hills of South Dakota, to be watched for along the Pine Ridge.

*Myotis sodalis* (Indiana myotis) — known from Iowa and Missouri and is a migratory species, to be watched for in the extreme southeastern portion of the state along river bottoms and wooded bluffs.

#### Order Carnivora

##### **Family Mephitidae** (skunks)

*Spilogale gracilis gracilis* (western spotted skunk) — may be present in extreme western Nebraska because it known in adjacent portions of Wyoming and Colorado.

#### Order Rodentia

##### Suborder Sciuromorpha

##### **Family Sciuridae** (squirrels)

*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus dakotensis* (red squirrel) — known from the Black Hills of South Dakota, to be watched for along the Pine Ridge.

##### Suborder Myomorpha

##### **Family Cricetidae** (New World rats and mice)

*Lemmyscus curtatus levidensis* (sagebrush vole) — known from Converse and Laramie counties in Wyoming, to be expected in sagebrush areas in the extreme western Panhandle.

### DOMESTIC MAMMALS FOUND IN NEBRASKA

These mammals may be found as feral individuals or populations.

#### Order Lagomorpha

##### **Family Leporidae** (rabbits and hares)

*Oryctolagus cuniculus* (European rabbits) — some escaped captives occasionally are taken in the wild.

#### Order Carnivora

##### **Family Felidae**

*Felis catus* (house cat) — there are feral cats in most areas of the state, which impact populations of small birds and mammals.

##### **Family Canidae**

*Canis familiaris* (dog) — there are feral dogs in many parts of the state, which may cause damage to livestock and wildlife.

**Order Perissodactyla****Family Equidae**

*Equus caballus* (horse) — there are numerous horses in the state, but no free-ranging individuals or populations are known at this time. One of the federal government's Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Centers is located in Nebraska.

**Order Artiodactyla****Family Suidae** (pigs)

*Sus scrofa* (wild boar or feral hogs) — several established feral populations are causing serious economic and environmental damage.

**Family Bovidae** (cattle)

*Bos taurus* (cow) — Nebraska is a leading beef producing the state, but no free-ranging individuals or populations are known at this time.

*Capra hircus* (domestic goat) — there are numerous goat herds in the state, but no free-ranging individuals or populations are known at this time.

*Ovis aries* (domestic sheep) — there are numerous sheep herds in the state, but no free-ranging individuals or populations are known at this time.

**INTRODUCED/INVASIVE SPECIES OF MAMMALS IN NEBRASKA****Order Artiodactyla****Family Cervidae** (deer)

*Dama dama* (fallow deer) — a released population was established in Boone Co. in 1930s and by mid-1950s had expanded to Greeley, Hall, Howard, and Wheeler counties; there have been no recent reports of this population.

**Order Rodentia****Suborder Myomorpha****Family Muridae** (Old World rats and mice)

*Mus musculus* (house mouse) — statewide in commensal and feral populations.

*Rattus norvegicus* (Norway rat) — statewide in commensal and feral populations.

**Suborder Hystricomorpha****Family Myocastoridae** (nutria)

*Myocastor coypus* (nutria) — some released or escaped individuals have been taken in the past; there are no currently established populations.



## KEY TO NEBRASKA MAMMALS

**Key to the Orders** (there are 9 orders and 101 species of mammals in Nebraska, including 89 native species, 4 introduced/invasive species, and 8 domestic mammals that may have feral populations)

1. Inner toe of hind foot opposable and without nail; marsupium in females; scrotum in males anterior to penis and anus as well as suspended from abdomen; incisors 5/4; molars 4/4 (Order DIDELPHIMORPHIA, Family Didelphidae) . . . . . *Didelphis virginiana* (Virginia opossum)
  - Inner toe of hind foot with a nail and not opposable; incisors 3/3 or fewer; molars 3/3 or 2/2 . . . . . 2
2. Hard dermal plates cover much of body, head, and tail; nearly hairless; teeth peg-like and uniform in appearance (Order CINGULATA, Family Dasypodidae) . . . . . *Dasypus novemcinctus* (nine-banded armadillo)
  - Body and head not armored with hard dermal plates; teeth not peg-like and not uniform in appearance . . . . . 3
3. Forelimbs modified for flight; fingers elongated to support the flight membrane of wings . . . . . Order CHIROPTERA II
  - Forelimbs not modified for flight . . . . . 4
4. Feet with hooves . . . . . 5
  - Feet with claws . . . . . 6
5. Hooves cloven; upper incisors absent (except in feral and domestic pigs, *Sus scrofa*, in which canines flare out the sides of the rostrum); no third trochanter on femur . . . . . Order ARTIODACTYLA VI
  - Hooves not cloven; upper incisors present; canines do not flare out the sides of the rostrum; third trochanter present on femur (Order PERISSODACTYLA, Family Equidae) . . . . . *Equus caballus* (horse)
6. Tooth rows with conspicuous diastema (space) between incisors and cheek teeth . . . . . 7
  - No diastema between incisors and cheek teeth . . . . . 8
7. Ears longer than tail; incisors 2/1, I1 chisel-like, I2 peg-like and posterior to I1 . . . . . Order LAGOMORPHA III
  - Ears generally much shorter than tail; incisors 1/1 and chisel-like . . . . . Order RODENTIA IV
8. Small size (total length less than 203 mm); ears and eyes small and inconspicuous; fleshy, mobile snout protrudes well beyond anterior edge of mouth; front 2 upper teeth enlarged followed by smaller teeth (unicuspids), presumably including the canine. . . . . Order SORICOMORPHA I
  - Total length greater than 200 mm (except in *Mustela nivalis*); ears and eyes large and conspicuous; snout not fleshy, mobile, or protruding; relatively small front

teeth (incisors, 3/3) are followed by conspicuously larger canine teeth . . . . .  
. . . . . Order CARNIVORA V

I. Order SORICOMORPHA (there are 6 species of shrews and 1 mole in Nebraska)

1. Forefeet broad and flattened, with long sturdy claws, adapted for digging; total length usually over 140 mm; teeth white; zygomatic arch present; auditory bullae inflated around inner ear (Family Talpidae) . . . . .  
. . . . . *Scalopus aquaticus* (eastern mole)

Forefeet slender and not modified for digging; total length less than 140 mm; teeth tipped with reddish brown; no zygomatic arch; ringlike bone surrounding inner ear (Family Soricidae) . . . . . 2

2. Total length more than 90 mm; posterior remnant of zygomatic arch projecting sharply from the greatest breadth of the braincase . . . . . 3

Total length less than 90 mm; no sharp projections at greatest width of braincase . . . . . 4

3. Total length rarely less than 125 mm; hind foot 15 mm or more; condylobasal length (occipital condyle to anteriormost edge of premaxillary bone) more than 22 mm; occurring in northern 2/3 of state, but absent west; parapatric with *B. hylophaga* . . . . .  
. . . . . *Blarina brevicauda* (northern short-tailed shrew)

Total length rarely exceeding 120 mm; hind foot 15 mm or less; condylobasal length less than 22 mm; occurring in southern Nebraska; parapatric with *B. brevicauda* . . . . .  
. . . . . *Blarina hylophaga* (Elliot's short-tailed shrew)

4. Tail short, about 25% or less of total length; 4 unicuspid, usually only 3 visible in side view . . . . . *Cryptotis parva* (North American least shrew)

Tail long, more than 30% of total length; 5 unicuspid all visible in side view; medial tines present on first upper incisors . . . . . 5

5. Third unicuspid in upper jaw smaller than fourth; fifth unicuspid smaller than third; condylobasal length 14.5 mm or less; rare, only in northwestern part of state . . . . . *Sorex nanus* (dwarf shrew)

Third unicuspid in upper jaw as large as or larger than fourth; condylobasal length 14.6 mm or more . . . . . 6

6. Pelage often pale with whitish underparts; in males flank glands usually large and conspicuous; maxillary breadth more than 4.6 mm; crowded unicuspid row; only found in northwestern Nebraska . . . . .  
. . . . . *Sorex merriami* (Merriam's shrew)

Pelage darker with brownish underparts; males with small and indistinct flank glands; maxillary breadth less than 4.6 mm; uncrowded unicuspid row; found over much of Nebraska . . . . . *Sorex cinereus* (masked shrew)

## II. Order CHIROPTERA (there are 13 species of bats in Nebraska)

1. Tail extending conspicuously (from about 1/3 to 1/2 its length) beyond posterior border of uropatagium (tail membrane); anterior border of ears with conspicuous bumps; ears nearly joined over forehead; lower incisors bifid; palate terminating only slightly behind last upper molars (Family Molossidae) . . . . . *Tadarida brasiliensis* (Brazilian free-tailed bat)
 

Tail not extending conspicuously (5 mm at most), if at all, beyond posterior border of uropatagium; anterior border of ears smooth; ears well separated; lower incisors trifid; palate terminating well behind last upper molars (Family Vespertilionidae) . . . . . 2
2. Ears long, more than 28 mm in length from notch . . . . . *Corynorhinus townsendii* (Townsend's big-eared bat)
 

Ears less than 23 mm in length from notch . . . . . 3
3. Upper surface of tail membrane completely furred; distal, underside of forearm furred; ears small and rounded; 1 upper incisor; 2 upper premolars, first molar minute and lingual . . . . . 4
 

Upper surface of uropatagium naked or furred proximally only a third to half its length; underside of wing naked; ears not rounded; 1 or 2 upper incisors; 2 upper premolars, but first molar in line with canines and P4s . . . . . 5
4. A large bat with forearm more than 45 mm; dorsal pelage "frosted" (dark brownish fur tipped with grayish white or yellowish white); black rim of ears contrasts sharply with an interior patch of light fur and skin; greatest length of skull more than 17.5 mm . . . . . *Lasiurus cinereus* (hoary bat)
 

A small bat with forearm less than 45 mm; dorsal pelage reddish orange to yellowish brown; skin of ears is pale orange and does not contrast sharply with interior; greatest length of skull less than 14.5 mm . . . . . *Lasiurus borealis* (eastern red bat)
5. Dorsal pelage black frosted with white; upper surface of rostrum with large paired concavities between anterior nares and orbits, one cavity on each side of rostrum; 36 teeth (I2/3, C1/1, P2/3, M3/3) . . . . . *Lasionycteris noctivagans* (silver-haired bat)
 

Dorsal pelage not black, not frosted; upper surface of rostrum lacking paired concavities; premolars 1/2, 2/2, or 3/3 but not 2/3 . . . . . 6
6. A large brown bat (total length more than 110 mm) with black patagia; forearm greater than 45 mm; uropatagium naked; greatest length of skull more than 18 mm; 32 teeth (I2/3, C1/1, P1/2, M3/3) . . . . . *Eptesicus fuscus* (big brown bat)
 

Bat smaller (total length less than 110 mm); forearm less than 45 mm; total teeth 30, 34 or 38 . . . . . 7
7. Dorsal pelage reddish brown to yellowish brown with tricolored fur; 34 teeth (I2/3, C1/1, P2/2, M3/3); upper surface of uropatagium furred proximally for about half its length . . . . . *Perimyotis subflavus* (American pipistrelle)

- Dorsal pelage brown to dull, yellow brown with bicolored fur; 30 or 38 teeth; upper surface of uropatagium naked or with a few hairs at its very base . . . . . 8
8. 30 teeth (I1/3, C1/1, P1/2, M3/3); tragus short, blunt with slight forward curve; living animal possesses pungent odor . . . . . *Nycticeius humeralis* (evening bat)
- 38 teeth (I2/3, C1/1, P3/3, M3/3); tragus roughly 50% height of ear or more and pointed; no noticeable smell . . . . . 9
9. Nebraska's smallest *Myotis* with forearm usually 33 mm or less; hind foot near 8 mm from heel; dorsal pelage pale yellowish brown, contrasting strongly with black ears, facial mask, and wing membranes; mastoid breadth and interorbital breadth usually no more than 7.5 and 3.5 mm, respectively . . . . . *Myotis ciliolabrum* (western small-footed myotis)
- Forearm more than 33 mm; hind foot usually greater than 8 mm; dorsal pelage brownish, not contrasting strongly with color of ears and membranes; mastoid breadth and interorbital breadth usually greater than 7.5 and 3.5 mm, respectively . . . . . 10
10. Ear when laid forward extending noticeably beyond tip of nose, length from notch 16 mm or more; length of maxillary tooththrow more than 5.5 mm; length of mandibular tooththrow more than 6.9 mm . . . . . 11
- Ear when laid forward extending barely, if at all, beyond tip of nose, length from notch 16 mm or less; length of maxillary tooththrow 5.5 mm or less; length of mandibular tooththrow 6.9 mm or less . . . . . 12
11. Posterior border of uropatagium with visible fringe of hairs; ears long, 18-21 mm from notch; greatest length of skull more than 16 mm . . . . . *Myotis thysanodes* (fringed myotis)
- Posterior border of uropatagium not visibly fringed with hairs; ears moderate in length, 16-18 mm from notch; greatest length of skull less than 16 mm . . . . . *Myotis septentrionalis* (northern myotis)
12. Calcar keeled; braincase rising abruptly from rostrum . . . . . *Myotis volans* (long-legged myotis)
- Calcar not keeled; braincase rising gradually from rostrum . . . . . *Myotis lucifugus* (little brown bat)

**III. Order LAGOMORPHA** (Family Leporidae; there are 5 species of rabbits in Nebraska)

1. Ear greater than 95 mm and tipped with black; hind foot greater than 110 mm; top of tail either black or white; interparietals fused with parietals (*Lepus*) . . . . . 2
- Ear less than 95 mm and not tipped with black; hind feet less than 110 mm; top of tail the same color as the body; interparietals not fused with parietals forming a distinctive island of bone. . . . . 3
2. Tail black above and onto the base of the back; bi- or trifurcate groove on front of upper incisor; mesopterygoid fossa at posterior end of the palate relatively narrow, usually less than 11 mm . . . . . *Lepus californicus* (black-tailed jackrabbit)

Tail all white, although sometimes with a thin black dorsal line; simple groove on front incisor; mesopterygoid fossa 11.5 mm or greater . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Lepus townsendii* (white-tailed jackrabbit)

3. Posterior branches of supraorbital separated from cranium; perforations at the base and rear of the skull; interparital bone quadrangular; posterior edge of palate usually lies behind the level of a line drawn between the third and fourth molariform teeth; because of domestication, size and coloration highly variable . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Oryctolagus cuniculus* (domestic rabbit, European rabbit, "Belgian" hare)

Posterior branches of supraorbital fused to cranium, no perforations at the base of skull; interparietal triangular; posterior edge of palate usually lies at, or in front of, the level of a line drawn between the third and fourth molariform teeth . . . . . 4

4. Pelage usually paler brown; ear about the same length as head, 62 mm or more from notch; auditory bullae large; external auditory meatus large with diameter 5.2 mm or more; found in western Nebraska . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Sylvilagus audubonii* (desert cottontail)

Pelage brownish; ear about 2/3 the length of head, 61 mm or less from notch; auditory bullae small; external auditory meatus small with diameter usually less than 5 mm; statewide . . *Sylvilagus floridanus* (eastern cottontail)

**IV. Order RODENTIA**

*Key to Families* (there are 39 species of rodents in Nebraska)

1. Size large; total length exceeding 750 mm; greatest length of skull exceeding 90 mm; weight over 3.5 kilograms . . . . . 2

Size medium to small; total length not exceeding 700 mm; greatest length of skull not exceeding 80 mm; weight not exceeding 2.5 kilograms . . . . . 4

2. Tail wide and flattened dorso-ventrally; infraorbital opening much smaller than foramen magnum (Family Castoridae) . . . . *Castor canadensis* (American beaver)

Tail not wide and flattened dorso-ventrally; infraorbital opening larger than foramen magnum . . . . . 3

3. Dorsal pelage with many stiff spines or quills; 5 toes of hind feet free, not webbed; paraoccipital processes not elongated and anteriorly curved; coronoid process of lower jaw developed, not vestigial (Family Erethizontidae) . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Erethizon dorsatum* (common porcupine)

Dorsal pelage without quills, but rather with dense underfur and long coarse guard hairs; first 4 toes of hind feet webbed, fifth toe free; elongated, anteriorly curved paraoccipital processes; coronoid process of lower jaw vestigial; no known populations in state (Family Myocastoridae) . . . . . *Myocaster coypus* (nutria)

4. Tail well-furred (individual hairs 4 mm or more), often fluffy; skull with noticeable postorbital processes . . . . . Family Sciuridae IVa

Tail not as well-furred with short fur (individual hairs less than 4 mm) or nearly naked (except for *Neotoma cinerea*); skull lacking postorbital processes . . . . . 5

- 5. External fur-lined cheek pouches present; cheek teeth 4/4 . . . . . 6  
 No external fur-lined cheek pouches; cheek teeth 3/3 or 4/3 . . . . . 7
- 6. Tail nearly naked and much less than 75% of head and body length; hind feet shorter than forefeet; skull heavy and robust; zygomatic breadth greater than mastoid breadth; no perforation through the vertical partition of the nasal cavity . . . . . Family Geomyidae IVb  
 Tail with short fur, sometimes tufted, and more than 75% of head and body length; hind feet elongated and longer than forefeet; skull lighter and more delicate; zygomatic breadth narrower than mastoid breadth; infraorbital foramina located in a vacuity that extends transversely through and perforates side of rostrum, actual hole can be seen through rostrum . . . . . Family Heteromyidae IVc
- 7. Tail very long and thin, close to 40% longer than head and body; belly hair white to base; dorsal hair coarse and brown tinged with gold or olive, with a medial dark band from head to tail; hind feet elongated and adapted for jumping; upper cheek teeth include P4 and 3 molars; infraorbital foramen large; zygomatic arch low (Family Dipodidae) . . . . . *Zapus hudsonius* (meadow jumping mouse)  
 Tail shorter than head and body; hindfeet not elongated; no P4 in upper tooth row, only three molars; infraorbital foramen not enlarged; zygomatic arch not low . . . 8
- 8. Annulations of scales on tail nearly or entirely concealed by hairs (except in muskrat); cheek teeth are variable with cusps or prisms but not with 3 longitudinal rows of cusps; New World rats and mice . . . . . Family Cricetidae IVd  
 Annulations on tail apparent on nearly naked tail; cheek teeth with 3 longitudinal rows of cusps; introduced Old World rats and mice . . . Family Muridae IVe

**IVa. Family Sciuridae** (there are 11 species in Nebraska)

- 1. Skin between foreleg and hindleg noticeably loose, forming a gliding membrane; nocturnal; found only in southeastern Nebraska along Missouri River; skull highly arched, highest over braincase; zygomatic plate low, slightly tilted upward. . . . .  
 . . . . . *Glaucomys volans* (southern flying squirrel)  
 Skin between foreleg and hindleg not forming a gliding membrane; diurnal; skull not arched or when arched only moderately so, highest over orbits; zygomatic plate usually tilted strongly upward . . . . . 2
- 2. A large ground squirrel with stout body, total length more than 540 mm, short fluffy tail; pelage grizzled brownish with blackish face and black feet and legs; white incisors; zygomatic breadth greater than 48 mm; supraorbital processes at right angle to skull; top of skull flat with shallow depression between supraorbital processes . . . . . *Marmota monax* (woodchuck)  
 Total length less than 540 mm; pelage not grizzled as above; incisors pigmented; zygomatic breadth less than 48 mm . . . . . 3
- 3. Total length of adults more than 375 mm; hind foot 55 mm or more . . . . . 4  
 Total length of adults less than 325 mm; hind foot less than 55 mm . . . . . 7

4. A ground squirrel with pale, sandy brown or yellowish pelage; short, non-fluffy tail (30% head and body length) with black tip; tooth rows converge posteriorly and teeth themselves are expanded laterally . . . . . *Cynomys ludovicianus* (black-tailed prairie dog)
- Tail without black tip and longer than 40% of head and body length; tooth rows parallel . . . . . 5
5. Furry tail about 50% of head and body length; ground squirrel with brownish grey, "salt and pepper" pelage with obscure black flecks on back; belly yellowish white; P3 well-developed; mostly in eastern Nebraska and associated with tall grass prairies, with associated woody vegetation . . . . . *Spermophilus franklinii* (Franklin's ground squirrel)
- Bushy tail, almost 90% of head and body length; rusty gray, gray or black squirrel with P3 peglike or absent; climbing, associated with trees . . . . . 6
6. Gray tree squirrel with white-tipped hairs on tail; underparts whitish; a small, peglike P3 usually (but not always) present; postorbital constriction more than 15 mm; can have a melanistic (black) phase . . . . . *Sciurus carolinensis* (eastern gray squirrel)
- Tree squirrel with rust-tipped hairs on tail; dorsal fur gray flecked with rust; underparts and feet rusty and back of ears rusty; P3 absent; can have a melanistic (black) phase . . . . . *Sciurus niger* (eastern fox squirrel)
7. Tail shorter (less than 60% of head and body length); white stripes on face (sometimes faint); infraorbital canal separates zygomatic plate and rostrum . . . . 8
- Tail longer (greater than 60% of head and body length); stripes only on back; infraorbital foramen pierces the zygomatic plate . . . . . 10
8. Ground squirrel with numerous light stripes alternating with dark stripes marked with distinctive light spots . . . . . *Spermophilus tridecemlineatus* (thirteen-lined ground squirrel)
- Pelage with indistinct spots and no stripes . . . . . 9
9. Total length of adults less than 230 mm; greatest skull length 38-40 mm; not common . . . . . *Spermophilus spilosoma* (spotted ground squirrel)
- Total length of adults over 270 mm; greatest skull length 48-50 mm; only in extreme western Nebraska Panhandle . . . . . *Spermophilus elegans* (Wyoming ground squirrel)
10. An eastern forest animal with rusty red pelage; black and light stripes do not continue to base of tail and rump is reddish; no P3; total length more than 235 mm; not common, found only in southeastern Nebraska along Missouri River . . . . . *Tamias striatus* (eastern chipmunk)
- A western pine forest or badlands animal with pale rusty pelage; stripes continue to base of tail; runs with tail up; P3 present; total length less than 235 mm . . . . . *Tamias minimus* (least chipmunk)

**IVb. Family Geomyidae** (there are 4 species in this family)

1. Each upper incisor with 2 distinctive grooves; hind foot more than 30 mm; body mass greater than 100 g . . . . . 2
- Upper incisors smooth; hind foot less than 30 mm; body mass 100 g or less . . . . .  
 . . . . . ***Thomomys talpoides*** (northern pocket gopher)

*Note: The current taxonomy of Geomys is in flux and the system presented here is just in the process of being defined. Pelage color and body size vary geographically and within populations of Geomys, thus they are not totally reliable in distinguishing among species. Molecular analysis may be necessary for consistent identification. Hybrid zones are known between some populations adding another level of difficulty in making proper identifications. Intensive sampling and study will be necessary to reach consistent identifications.*

2. Dorsal pelage ranging from liver brown to chestnut brown; total length of adult females generally greater than 245 mm and adult males generally over 275 mm; condylobasal length of adult females generally over 45 mm and adult males generally over 51 mm; in the eastern one-third of Nebraska . . . . .  
 . . . . . ***Geomys bursarius*** (plains pocket gopher)

Dorsal pelage paler, ranging from buffy to pale brown; total length of females generally less than 245 mm and adult males generally less than 275 mm; condylobasal length of adult females generally less than 45 mm and males generally less than 51 mm; found in the western two-thirds of Nebraska . . . . . 3

3. Pelage generally pale brown with smaller body size (up to 305 gm, greatest skull length may exceed 50 mm); in the Sand Hills and adjacent areas . . . . .  
 . . . . . ***Geomys lutescens*** (Sand Hills pocket gopher)

An intermediate-sized pocket gopher, smaller in overall size than *G. bursarius*; size similar to *G. lutescens*; pelage darker than *G. lutescens*, but paler than *G. bursarius*; occurs in southwestern Nebraska . . . . .  
 . . . . . ***Geomys jugossicularis*** (Hall's pocket gopher)

**IVc. Family Heteromyidae** (there are 5 species in Nebraska)

1. Distinctive white diagonal stripe on flank; tail with tufted tip and about 25% longer than head and body; hind foot more than 35 mm; anterior zygomatic arch with lateral extensions; auditory bullae greatly enlarged . . . . .  
 . . . . . ***Dipodomys ordii*** (Ord's kangaroo rat)

No distinctive stripe on flank; hind foot less than 30 mm; tail without tuft and about as long as or shorter than head and body length; skull without lateral extensions on zygomatic arch, and auditory bullae enlarged but not greatly inflated . . . . . 2

2. Dorsal fur with long, coarse hairs; total length more than 180 mm; greatest skull length less than 35 mm . . . . . ***Chaetodipus hispidus*** (hispid pocket mouse)

Dorsal fur lacking long coarse hairs; total length less than 150 mm; greatest skull length less than 25 mm . . . . . 3

3. A clear yellow patch behind each ear (postauricular patch), larger than the ear;



- interparietal bone often smaller than width of interorbital breadth . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Perognathus flavus* (silky pocket mouse)
- Postauricular patch smaller than ear and often inconspicuous; width of interparietal  
 bone about same as interorbital breadth . . . . . 4
4. Auditory bullae generally not meeting anteriorly at midline on ventral side of  
 cranium; dorsal color olivaceous, with pale yellow on ears and on sides; found in  
 areas north and west of Sand Hills. . . . .  
 . . . . . *Perognathus fasciatus* (olive-backed pocket mouse)
- Auditory bullae generally meeting anteriorly at midline on ventral cranium;  
 dorsal color buffy to brownish; statewide . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Perognathus flavescens* (plains pocket mouse)
- IVd. Family Cricetidae** (native rats and mice; there are 13 species in Nebraska)
1. Tail laterally flattened and nearly naked; front feet with claws on 5 toes; fringe  
 of stiff hairs on toes of hind feet; teeth like *Microtus* with crescent-shaped cusps;  
 skull greater than 60 mm . . . . . *Ondatra zibethicus* (common muskrat)
- Tail rounded; front feet with claws on 4 toes; no fringe present on toes of hind  
 feet; teeth variable; skull less than 60 mm . . . . . 2
2. Total length greater than 345 mm; skull greater than 40 mm . . . . . 3
- Total length less than 345 mm; skull less than 40 mm . . . . . 4
3. Tail bushy, soles of hind feet partly furred; nasal septum divided by prominent  
 notch . . . . . *Neotoma cinerea* (bushy-tailed woodrat)
- Tail not bushy, although fully haired; soles of hind feet naked; nasal septum  
 complete . . . . . *Neotoma floridana* (eastern woodrat)
4. Cheek teeth with looping S-shaped cusps; combination of short ears (barely  
 twice as long as adjacent fur) and tail greater than 50% of body length; south  
 of Platte River in central, and South Platte River in western Nebraska . .  
 . . . . . *Sigmodon hispidus* (hispid cotton rat)
- Not as above . . . . . 5
5. Cheek teeth flattened with alternating, sharp-edged triangular cusps; ears  
 short, barely twice as long as adjacent fur . . . . . 6
- Cheek teeth without sharp-edged triangular cusps; ears clearly longer than  
 twice the length of adjacent fur . . . . . 9
6. Tail equal to or shorter than hind foot in length; upper incisors grooved on  
 anterior surface . . . . . *Synaptomys cooperi* (southern bog lemming)
- Tail longer than hind foot; upper incisors not grooved . . . . . 7
7. Tail usually less than 25 mm; dorsal pelage with reddish tinge, soft and smooth  
 as in a mole; not common on the very eastern edge of Nebraska . . . . .  
 . . . . . *Microtus pinetorum* (woodland vole)

- Tail 29 mm or more; pelage coarser and without tinge of red . . . . . 8
- 8. Ventral pelage grayish, never buff; usually 6 pads on hind foot; fourth triangle of M2 with prominent heel that often appears as a distinct fifth triangle . . . . . *Microtus pennsylvanicus* (meadow vole)
- Belly hairs washed with yellowish or orange buff; usually 5 pads on hind foot but sometimes six; fourth triangle of M2 lacking heel . . . . . *Microtus ochrogaster* (prairie vole)
- 9. Upper incisors grooved on anterior surface . . . . . 10
- Upper incisors not grooved . . . . . 11
- 10. Dark thin pencil line on dorsal surface of tail; often with an indistinct dark stripe down middle of back, contrasting with paler sides; rostrum relatively short; greatest length of skull 20 mm or less . . . . . *Reithrodontomys montanus* (plains harvest mouse)
- Dark dorsal line on tail broad, fading gradually into light color underneath; rarely with dark area down middle of back; rostrum relatively long and narrow; greatest length of skull 20 mm or more . . . . . *Reithrodontomys megalotis* (western harvest mouse)
- 11. Plump tail less than half the length of head and body; dorsal fur of juveniles and adults often light gray (old individuals may be brown); coronoid process long and recurved, extending up to or higher than condyloid process . . . . . *Onychomys leucogaster* (northern grasshopper mouse)
- Slender tail more than 60% of head and body length; dorsal fur of adults brown or dark grayish brown; coronoid not as well-developed . . . . . 12
- 12. Tail typically sharply bicolored and less than 65 mm long; hind foot usually less than 21 mm; skull usually less than 25 mm long . . . . . *Peromyscus maniculatus* (North American deer mouse)
- Tail usually not sharply bicolored (except in fresh winter coat) and greater than 65 mm long; hind foot 21 mm or more; skull usually greater than 25 mm long . . . . . *Peromyscus leucopus* (white-footed deer mouse)

**IVe. Family Muridae** (Old World rats and mice; 2 species invasive in Nebraska)

- 1. Total length less than 200 mm; skull less than 20 mm; incisors notched at tip when viewed laterally . . . . . *Mus musculus* (house mouse)
- Total length of adult over 200 mm; length of skull more than 20 mm; incisors not notched . . . . . *Rattus norvegicus* (Norway rat; laboratory rat)

## V. Order CARNIVORA

### **Key to Families** (there are 22 species of carnivores in Nebraska)

1. Cheek teeth bunodont, without carnassials or any conspicuous cutting edges . . . . 2  
     Cheek teeth with conspicuous carnassials . . . . . 3
2. Tail inconspicuous and shorter than hind foot; premolars 4/4, molars 2/3; extirpated or uncommon . . . . . Family Ursidae Va  
     Tail long and conspicuously ringed; premolars 4/4, molars 2/2 (Family Procyonidae) . . . . . **Procyon lotor** (common raccoon)
3. 1 upper molar; upper molar dumbbell-shaped or squarish . . . . . 4  
     1 or 2 upper molars; if 1 upper molar, tiny and round in shape, but if 2, first molar large and triangular in shape . . . . . 5
4. Black body conspicuously marked with white stripes or spots; anal scent glands hyper-developed enough to be aimed and sprayed at a target; hard palate not extending much beyond molars . . . . . Family Mephitidae Vc  
     Pelage not as above; anal scent glands present but not used to spray; body elongate, low to the ground with short legs; hard palate extends well beyond molars . . . . . Family Mustelidae Vd
5. Muzzle long and narrow; claws not retractile; auditory bullae not divided by a bony septum; carnassials with both a shearing blade and a flattened grinding surface; 42 teeth; more than 1 upper and lower molar . . . . . Family Canidae Vb  
     Muzzle short and broad; claws retractile and hidden in fur; auditory bullae internally divided by a bony septum; carnassial pair with shearing edges only; 28-30 teeth; only 1 upper and lower molar . . . . . Family Felidae Ve

### **Va. Family Ursidae** (2 species historically extirpated in Nebraska)

1. Shoulder hump present; claws on front feet longer than claws on hind feet; second upper molar broadest anteriorly; maxillary toothrow greater than 110 mm; extirpated . . . . . **Ursus arctos** (grizzly bear)  
     No shoulder hump present; claws on front and hind feet approximately equal length; second upper molar broadest in middle of tooth; maxillary toothrow less than 110 mm; seen recently in western Nebraska . . . . .  
     . . . . . **Ursus americanus** (black bear)

### **Vb. Family Canidae** (there are 5 species and 1 historically extirpated in Nebraska)

1. Total length more than 1050 mm; condylobasal length more than 150 mm; sagittal crest present; postorbital process thickened and convex dorsally . . . . . 2  
     Total length less than 1050 mm; condylobasal length less than 150 mm; no sagittal crest; postorbital process thin, concave dorsally . . . . . 4

- 2. Large and robust; total length more than 1400 mm; condylobasal length more than 200 mm; length of lower carnassial (m1) more than 25 mm in length . . . . . **Canis lupus** (wolf)

Neither as large nor as robust; total length less than 1400 mm; condylobasal length less than 200 mm; length of lower carnassial less than 25 mm in length . . . . . 3

- 3. Pelage brownish gray; orbits not rising abruptly above rostrum; dewclaw often absent . . . . . **Canis latrans** (coyote)

Pelage variable in color; orbits usually rising abruptly above rostrum; dewclaw frequently present . . . . . **Canis familiaris** (dog)

- 4. Dorsum of skull rising abruptly at orbits; temporal ridges generally not prominent . . . . . **Canis familiaris** (dog)

Dorsum of skull flat from nasals to orbits; temporal ridges prominent . . . 5

- 5. Dorsal pelage grizzled grayish; tail with black dorsal stripe; fur of cheeks and backs of ears reddish; temporal ridge U-shaped or lyre-shaped; mandible with notch on lower border . . . . . **Urocyon cinereoargenteus** (common gray fox)

Pelage not gray; tail without black dorsal stripe; backs of ears not reddish; skull without U-shaped ridge; mandible without notch . . . . . 6

- 6. Dorsal pelage and tail reddish; tip of tail white; ears with black tips; temporal ridges on skull V-shaped; condylobasal length more than 125 mm; length of maxillary tooththrow more than 55 mm; statewide . . . . . **Vulpes vulpes** (red fox)

Upper parts yellowish brown, fur on cheek white; tip of tail black; ears not black-tipped; temporal ridges reduced; condylobasal length less than 125 mm; length of maxillary tooththrow less than 55 mm; western Nebraska only . . . . . **Vulpes velox** (swift fox)

**Vc. Family Mephitidae** (there are 2 species in Nebraska)

- 1. Dorsal pelage with 2 white stripes merging anteriorly; skull arched with orbital region rounded; mastoids and auditory bullae not inflated; notch on bottom edge of mandible; maxillary tooththrow greater than 20 mm; zygomatic breadth greater than 40 mm . . . . . **Mephitis mephitis** (striped skunk)

Dorsal pelage with 4 or more broken white lines, giving a spotted appearance; white spot on head; skull profile flattened and not arched; mastoid and auditory bullae inflated; no notch on mandible; maxillary tooththrow less than 20 mm; zygomatic breadth less than 40 mm . . . **Spilogale putorius** (eastern spotted skunk)

**Vd. Family Mustelidae** (there are 7 species in Nebraska)

- 1. Toes webbed; dense, dark brown fur; tail wide at base joining the body smoothly so that the overall contour of the body is streamlined; second lower incisor large and behind other incisors; premolars 4/3 (36 teeth); extirpated but reintroduced . . . . . **Lontra canadensis** (North American river otter)

Toes not webbed; premolars not 4/3 . . . . . 2

2. Dorsal pelage dark brown or blackish with paler brownish stripes laterally; premolars 4/4 (38 teeth); extirpated . . . . . ***Gulo gulo*** (wolverine)  
Pelage not as above; premolars 3/3 (34 teeth) . . . . . 3
3. Pelage yellowish gray; white medial stripe from nose to nape, head marked with black and white stripes; skull length greater than 90 mm; upper molar triangular-shaped; braincase triangular-shaped . . . . . ***Taxidea taxus*** (American badger)  
Pelage not as above; skull length less than 75 mm; upper molars dumbbell-shaped; braincase elongate and not triangular . . . . . 4
4. Total length less than 475 mm; length of skull less than 55 mm . . . . . 5  
Total length more than 475 mm; length of skull more than 55 mm . . . . . 6
5. Total length more than 200 mm; tail with distal 1/3 black; length of skull generally greater than 44 mm; maxillary toothrow greater than 12 mm . . . . . ***Mustela frenata*** (long-tailed weasel)  
Total length usually less than 200 mm; tail not tipped with black, but a few black hairs may be present; length of skull less than 36 mm; maxillary toothrow less than 12 mm . . . . . ***Mustela nivalis*** (least weasel)
6. Pelage uniformly dark chocolate brown with occasional white patches ventrally; short webs between toes; medial distance between canines about equal to medial distance between auditory bullae; first lower molar with distinctive metaconid (cone located on the postero-lingual face of the trigonid). . . . . ***Neovison vison*** (American mink)  
Pelage buffy, with black legs, feet, and tip of tail, distinctive black mask across eyes; medial distance between canines greater than medial distance between auditory bullae; first lower molar with indistinct metaconid; extirpated . . . . . ***Mustela nigripes*** (black-footed ferret)
- Ve. Family Felidae** (4 species can occur in Nebraska)
1. Tail 30 to 50% of total length; 4 upper cheek teeth, 30 teeth . . . . . 2  
Tail less than 20% total length; only 3 upper cheek teeth, 28 teeth . . . . . 3
2. Condylbasal length greater than 150 mm . . . . . ***Puma concolor*** (mountain lion)  
Condylbasal less than 100 mm . . . . . ***Felis catus*** (house cat)
3. Tip of tail black; pelage long, thick, and yellowish brown with a gray frosted appearance; ears tipped with tufts of long black hair; condyloid foramen usually separate from jugular foramen at posterior base of auditory bullae; not common . . . . . ***Lynx canadensis*** (Canadian lynx)  
Tail with incomplete black tip, with white on underside; pelage yellowish to reddish brown with black streaks and spots; ears tipped only with tufts of short black hair; anterior condyloid foramen usually confluent with jugular foramen at posterior base of auditory bullae; common . . . . . ***Lynx rufus*** (bobcat)

**VI. Order ARTIODACTYLA** (there are 12 species in Nebraska)

- 1. Incisors present in upper jaw (Family Suidae) . . . . . ***Sus scrofa*** (pig)  
 No incisors present in upper jaw . . . . . 2
- 2. Horns present (or horn cores) in adults of both sexes . . . . . 3  
 Deciduous antlers present in males (Family Cervidae) . . . . . 8
- 3. Horns round in cross-section, unbranched, and permanent; usually a single lacrimal foramen occurs in the rim of orbit; sutures separate lacrimal from nasal bones (Family Bovidae) . . . . . 4  
 Horns oval in cross-section and forked, their external sheaths are lost from the horn core annually; two lacrimal foramina in rim of orbit; ethmoid vacuity separates lacrimal from nasal bones; dorsal pelage chestnut with two broad white stripes across throat (Family Antilocapridae) . . . . . ***Antilocapra americana*** (pronghorn)
- 4. Horn sheath heavily ridged; curving downward or directed posteriorly over back; adults medium to small, usually weight under 175 kilograms . . . . . 5  
 Horn sheath completely smooth, curving upwards; adults large, usually weight over 225 kilograms . . . . . 7
- 5. Horns scimitar or corkscrew in shape, generally directed posteriorly over back; distinctive V or U shaped groove on forehead between horns; infraorbital foramen is large and does not have a well-defined rim anteriorly; premaxilla extends back as a wedge between the nasal and maxilla; because of domestication size and coloration highly variable . . . . . ***Capra hircus*** (domestic goat)  
 Horns curving backward and downward to form a massive spiral especially in adult males; no distinctive groove on forehead between horns; deep lacrimal or pre-orbital pit present; infraorbital foramen is small with a well-defined rim around it; premaxilla does not extend back as a wedge between the nasal and maxilla . . . . . 6
- 6. Rim of orbits enlarged, distinctly raised above the level of the surrounding cranial bones; bones of braincase enlarged, heavy; pelage grayish brown; rump, backs of legs, and muzzle white . . . . . ***Ovis canadensis*** (bighorn sheep)  
 Rims of the orbits slightly enlarged and slightly raised above the level of the surrounding cranial bones; bones of braincase not enlarged or heavy; because of domestication size and coloration highly variable . . . . ***Ovis aries*** (domestic sheep)
- 7. Large dark brown mammal with hump on shoulders; shaggy front quarters; bearded; smooth, glossy black horns curving upward and inward; premaxillary bone not extending to nasals; massive head subtriangular, with frontal bone greatly expanded and hiding zygomatic arches from dorsal view; no prominent ridge between horns or horn bases; maxillary tooththrow long, over 110 mm; not a free-ranging species in Nebraska . . . . . ***Bison bison*** (American bison)  
 Pelage and coloration variable; not shaggy or bearded; horns if present often facing anteriorly; premaxillary extending to nasal; head elongate, less massive and frontal bone not covering zygomatic arches in dorsal view; prominent ridge at top

of skull between horns or horn bases; maxillary tooththrow shorter, usually under 110 mm; because of domestication size variable . . . . . *Bos taurus* (cow)

8. Length of skull over 350 mm . . . . . 9

Length of skull less than 350 mm . . . . . 10

9. Antlers palmate on most of the main beam; bulbous nose; pendulous skin growth on throat; greatest length of skull more than 500 mm; premaxillary bone elongated; nasals much shorter than elongated premaxillae; no canines present; rare . . . . . *Alces alces* (moose)

Antlers not palmate; greatest length of skull less than 500 mm; nasals are long relative to short premaxillae; canines present but reduced to a small peg . . . . . *Cervus elaphus* (elk or wapiti)

10. Antlers palmate; a black dorsal stripe extend from nape of neck down back and merges with black of upper surface of tail; white spots on back and sides, merging into a white line on side and haunches near rump; vomer does not divide the internal nares into two chambers; no current populations known in Nebraska . . . . . *Dama dama* (fallow deer)

Antlers not palmate, rather branching; no black stripe down back; no white spots on back and sides in adults; vomer high, dividing the internal nares into two chambers posteriorly . . . . . 11

11. Antlers typically with one main beam extending forward from which arise a series of simple tines; tail broad, brown above, white below, and often held vertically as a flag when running; lacrimal pit shallow . . . . . *Odocoileus virginianus* (white-tailed deer)

Antlers dichotomously branching, with each branching point forming a "Y;" tail white and narrow, tipped with black and not held high when running; lacrimal pit deep . . . . . *Odocoileus hemionus* (mule deer)



Black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*). Photograph by Keith Geluso.

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Big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). Photograph by Russell A. Benedict.



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Dr. Hugh H. Genoways is a Professor Emeritus of the University of Nebraska State Museum. He is a specialist in the systematics, biodiversity, and biogeography of New World mammals. He has conducted extensive field research in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Nicaragua, Australia, India, Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname, Trinidad, and throughout the Caribbean islands. He served as the Curator of Mammals at the Museum of Texas Tech University and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History before becoming the Director of the University of Nebraska State Museum from 1986 to 1994. He served as the chair of the Museum Studies Program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln for 15 years and taught courses in the School of Natural Resources. He is the author of more than 250 scientific papers, book chapters, and books on the subjects of mammalogy and museology.

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Dr. Patricia W. Freeman is a Professor in the School of Natural Resources and Curator of Zoology in the University of Nebraska State Museum. Dr. Freeman has been in small and large museums most of her career, ranging from the herbarium at

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Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*). Photograph by Greg D. Wright.





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