



No. 15

Nebraska State Symbols

Many well-known symbols represent the State of Nebraska. The first official symbol of Nebraska was the state seal created by a law passed in 1867. Then, in 1925 the legislature passed a law calling for a state flag. It was to be "national blue" with the state seal in the center in silver and gold.



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

The flag was first displayed at a University of Nebraska football game in 1925. It was dedicated on New Year's Day of 1926 at the capitol building at a reception attended by over 4000 people. This flag now hangs in the office of the Secretary of State.

The Western Meadowlark was chosen as the state bird by the legislature in 1927. It was a popular choice because the meadowlark helps control harmful insects and has such a beautiful song. It is found throughout the state but does prefer grasslands and open fields.



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

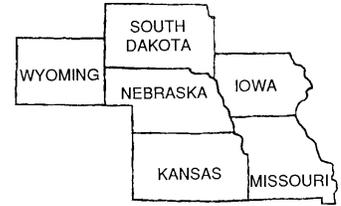
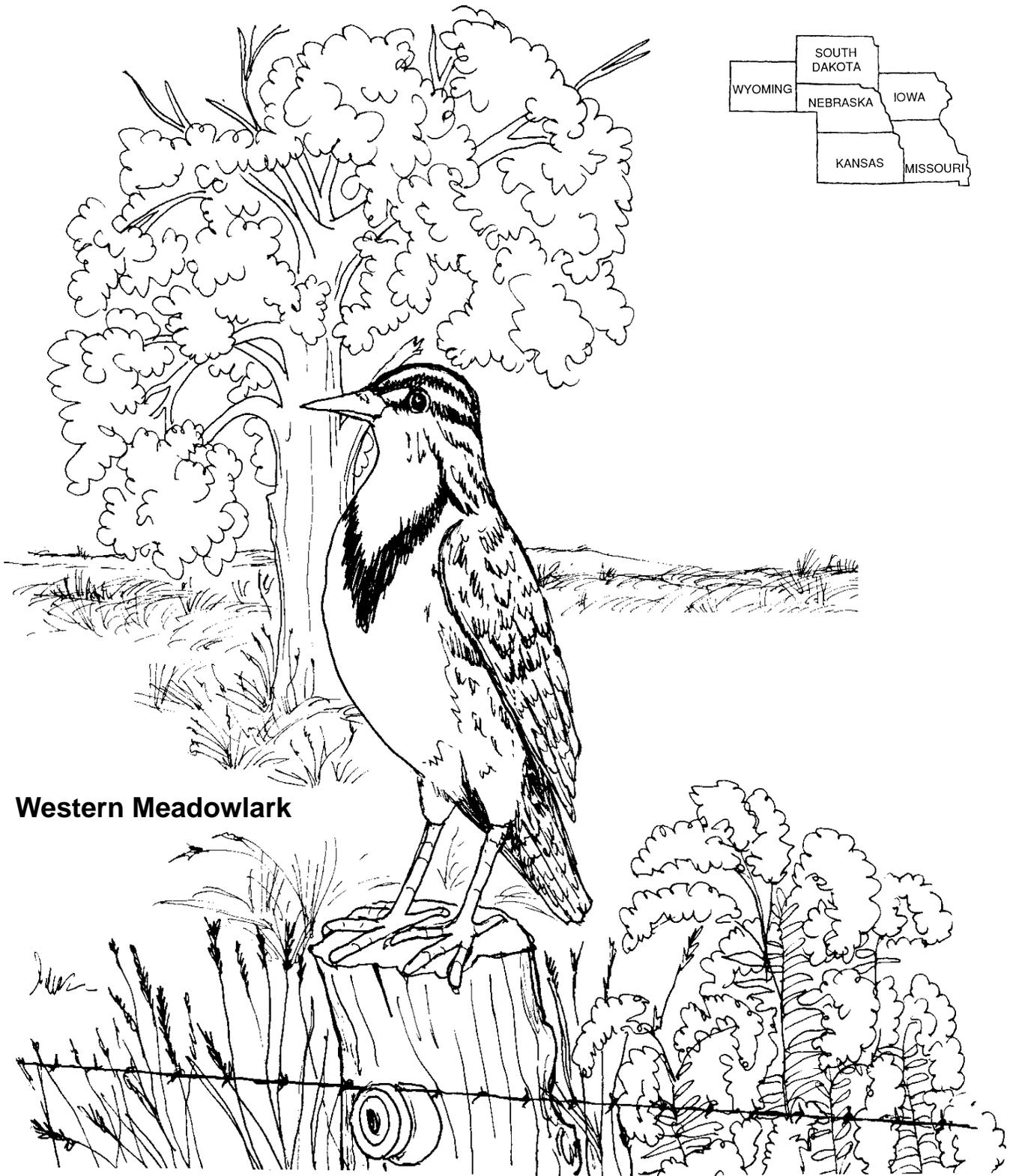
School children from Auburn suggested the honeybee as the Nebraska State insect. In 1975 Governor J. James Exon signed a law that made it official. Honeybees were brought to this continent in the seventeenth century by the first settlers from Europe.



The mammoth was designated the state fossil in 1967. Fossil bones of the largest mammoth in the world were found in Lincoln County. It was about fourteen feet tall at the shoulder. This giant elephant once roamed throughout Nebraska. It became extinct more than 10,000 years ago.



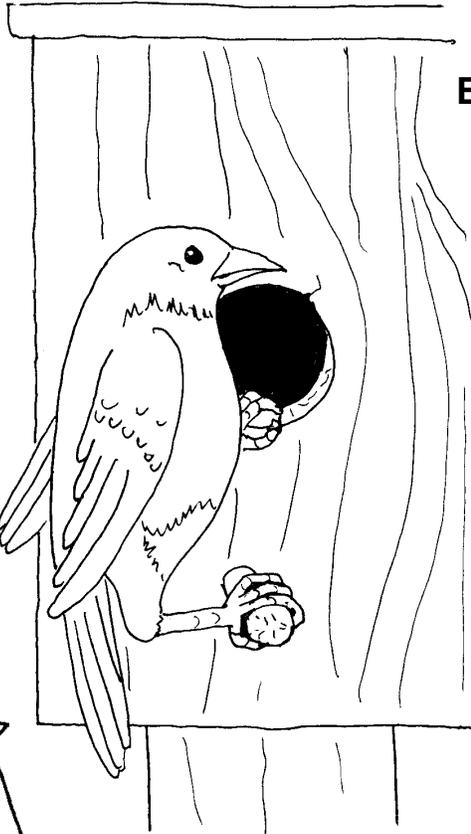
Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission



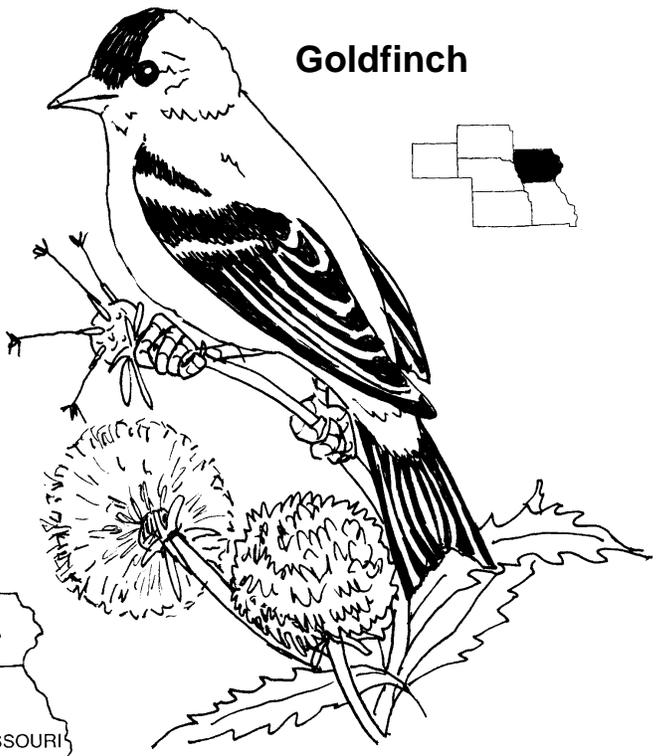
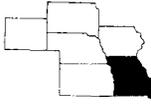
Western Meadowlark

Nebraska, Kansas, and Wyoming have chosen the meadowlark as their state bird. Look for a meadowlark and listen for its song. What does it sound like to you? One suggestion is: "*Poor Mary tore her new petticoat.*"

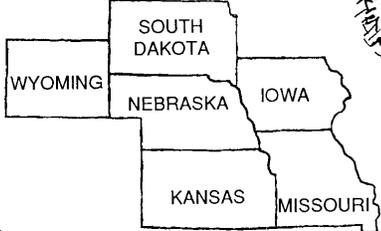
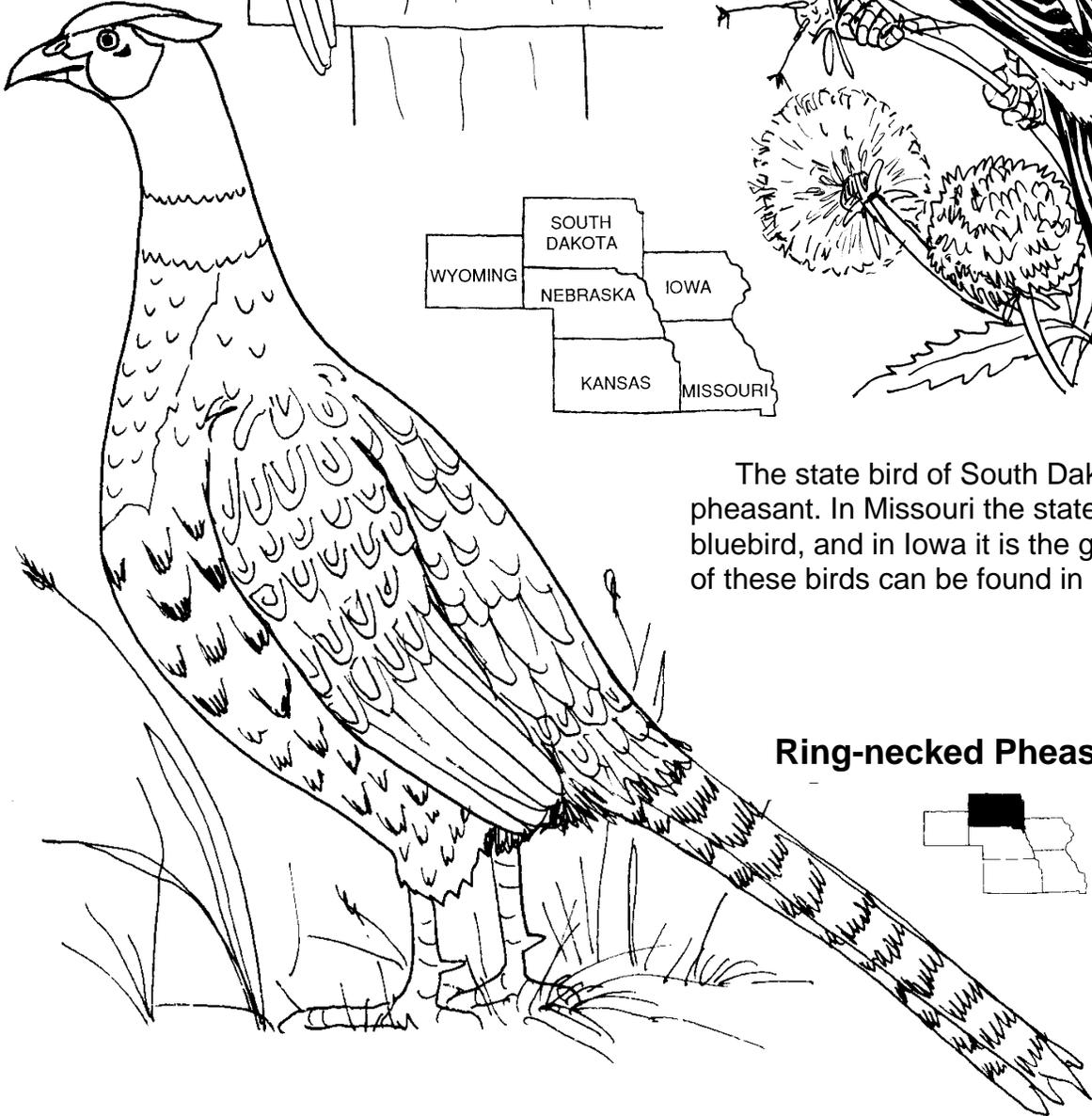
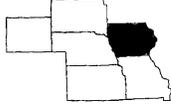




Eastern Bluebird

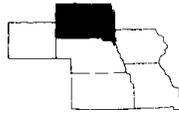


Goldfinch



The state bird of South Dakota is the pheasant. In Missouri the state bird is the bluebird, and in Iowa it is the goldfinch. All of these birds can be found in Nebraska.

Ring-necked Pheasant





The Oregon Trail is a symbol Nebraska shares with other western states. Many paintings like this one, and other works of art, commemorate the pioneers' journey to the west.



Chimney Rock is a well-known symbol of Nebraska. It was an important landmark for pioneers on the Oregon Trail. Today many tourists visit the site in Morrill County. Pictures of Chimney Rock have appeared on such different things as automobile license plates and the masthead of the *Nebraska Trailblazer*.

Scott's Bluff, like Chimney Rock, was a landmark on the Oregon Trail. Pioneers crossed the barrier through Mitchell Pass. The ruts left by their wagons can still be seen here.



The Pine Ridge country is in north-western Nebraska. The eroded hills and buttes make it one of the state's most prominent and memorable geographic features. Fort Robinson State Park is located there.



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission



The Nebraska Sandhills cover about 18,000 square miles or nearly one-fourth of the state. Much of the Sandhills is not suitable for farming, but the native grasses that grow there provide an excellent pasture for cattle and horses. In the valleys, grass is cut, stacked, and fed to the cattle in the winter.

The Platte River symbolized the area long before Nebraska became a state. The Platte is called a braided river because it has many channels and looks like a braid when seen from an airplane. The river's name is from a French word meaning flat. The word Nebraska comes from the Oto Indian name for the river.



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Lake McConaughy is Nebraska's largest lake and one of its most popular recreation areas. The lake is formed by Kingsley Dam which was completed in 1941. It was built to provide water for irrigation and to produce electric power.

Goldenrod was declared the state flower in 1895. This hardy plant grows throughout Nebraska and is a native of the state. The bright yellow flowers bloom in the fall. The pollen from the blossoms does not cause hay fever.



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

The cottonwood tree is another Nebraska native. It too is found throughout the state but grows best near rivers and streams. A fully grown tree may be eighty feet tall. White fibers that look like cotton are attached to the seeds. Spring breezes can blow the cottony seeds for miles.

Other symbols adopted by the legislature include Little Bluestem as the state grass, Prairie Agate (pronounced "ag-it") as the state rock, and Blue Chalcedony (pronounced "kal-sed-oh-nee") as the state gem.



Photo courtesy Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

The Sandhill crane is becoming a symbol of Nebraska as more people become interested in these large, graceful birds. Thousands of cranes spend a week or two feeding and resting along the Platte River, usually in late March. They are on their migration from Texas to their summer home in Canada.



In recent years, University of Nebraska football has become so well-known that it could be called a symbol of the state. The University's athletic teams have been called the Cornhuskers since 1900. The name is often used to mean all Nebraskans. Nicknames for the teams used before 1900 included the Antelopes and the Bugeaters.



The Nebraska State Capitol building is another unofficial symbol of the state. It is recognized as an architectural masterpiece. Construction began in 1922.

Nebraska has the only Unicameral Legislature in the nation. Other states have two groups of legislators who are usually called representatives and senators. Since 1935 Nebraska has had one group of lawmakers called senators.



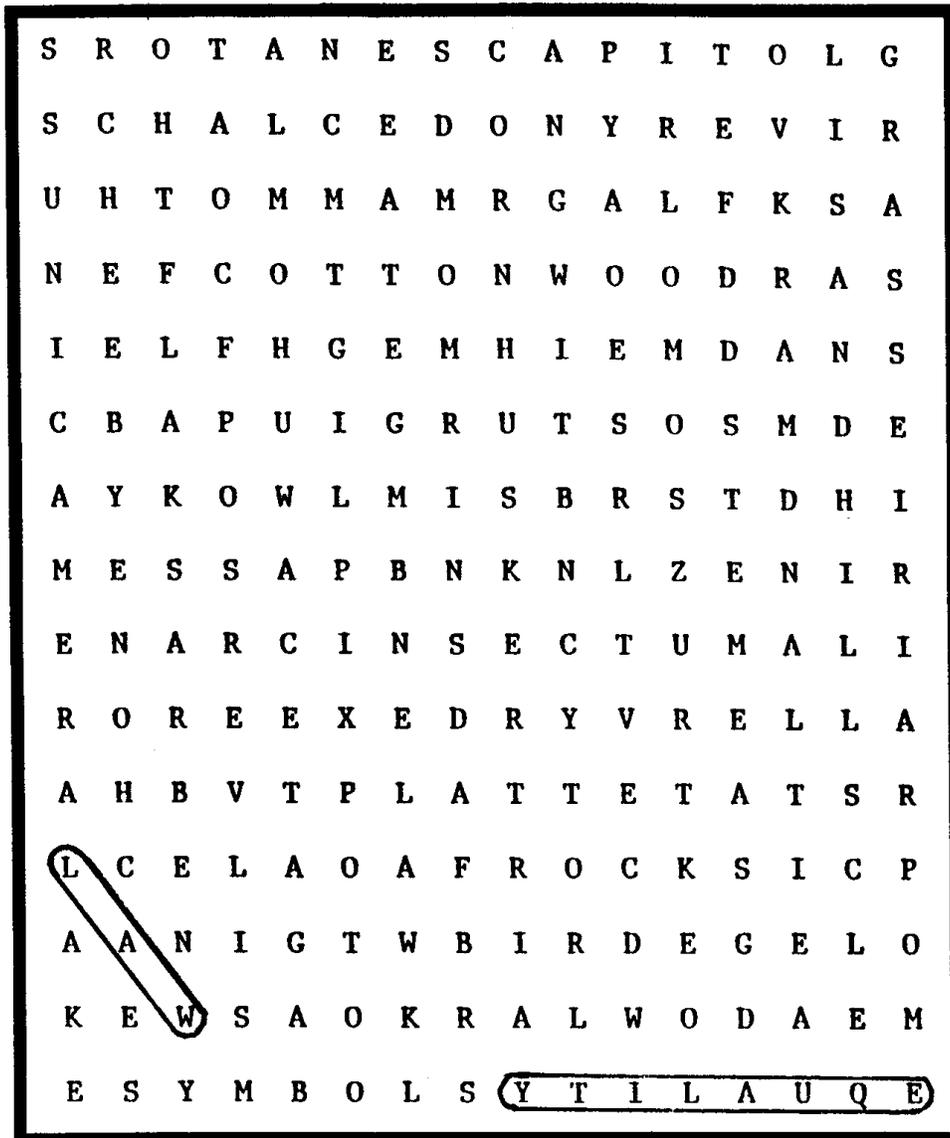
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WORD SEARCH

How many of the words listed below can you find? Look forward and backward, up and down, and diagonally.



Motto on State Seal: "EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW"

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| Agate | Goldenrod | Prairie |
| Bird | Grass | River |
| Blue | Honeybee | Rock |
| Bluff | Insect | Ruts |
| Capitol | Lake | Sandhills |
| Chalcedony | Landmark | Seal |
| Chimney | Law | Senators |
| Cornhusker | Mammoth | Silver |
| Cottonwood | Meadowlark | State |
| Crane | Nebraska | Stem |
| Equality | Oto | Symbols |
| Flag | Pass | Unicameral |
| Gem | Platte | West |