

What is the Shrubsteppe?

Shrubsteppe is an arid ecosystem found in Eastern Washington and other western states. This landscape is dominated by rolling, grassy plains, or “steppe” with an overstory of sagebrush and other woody shrubs. On the ground, a fragile community of microscopic organisms form the cryptobiotic crust which locks in moisture and helps prevent erosion.

Shrubsteppe landscapes contain many habitat features, including streams, wetlands, rocky talus slopes, canyons, and draws. These features support a variety of plant and animals uniquely adapted to the harsh and sensitive shrubsteppe ecosystem.

A Vanishing Landscape

Intact shrubsteppe is a rare gem that must be protected. Before non-native settlers arrived, over 10.4 million acres of pristine shrubsteppe covered Eastern Washington.

Today, an estimated 80% of historic shrubsteppe has been converted to homes, businesses, roads, and agriculture.

Most of the remaining shrubsteppe is highly degraded and fragmented, and susceptible to invasion by non-native plants. These plants provide poor forage for wildlife and increase the frequency and intensity of wildfires, adding to the shrubsteppe’s continued decline.

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wdfw.wa.gov/shrubsteppe

Individuals who need to receive this information in an alternative format, language, or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact the Title VI/ADA Compliance Coordinator by phone at 360-902-2349, TTY (711), or email (Title6@dfw.wa.gov).

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Explore Shrubsteppe

Recreation & Conservation
on Washington Wildlife Areas

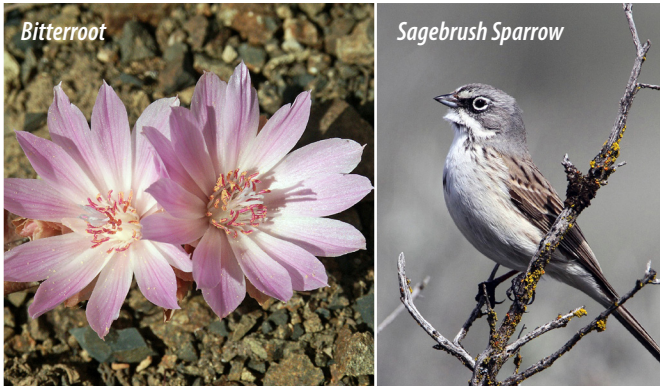


Wildlife of the Shrubsteppe

Over 200 species of birds, 30 species of mammals, and numerous species of reptiles, amphibians, and insects live in and depend on Washington's shrubsteppe.

Look for mule deer, Western fence lizards, mountain bluebirds, and northern Pacific rattlesnakes hiding amongst the sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife strives to maintain and restore shrubsteppe to benefit all species. When you visit a wildlife area, you may see staff and volunteers planting native plants or removing invasive weeds.



Recreate Responsibly

- Follow all rules (WAC 220-500) and restrictions posted on signs.
- Stay on marked paths to reduce damage to plants and soil.
- Bring your Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Pass to park on state lands. Bring plenty of water and be prepared for ticks, snakes, and hot weather.
- Check with the local WDFW office for any seasonal restrictions or closures.

For more information, visit wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas

Recreation in Shrubsteppe Country

1 Cowiche Unit, Oak Creek Wildlife Area Naches, Yakima County

Discover a variety of bird species found only in the shrubsteppe, alongside mule deer and elk. Watch for rare Monarch butterflies nectaring on milkweed.

Hike, horseback ride, birdwatch, or fish while enjoying the sights and sounds of a high-functioning shrubsteppe ecosystem.

2 Quincy Lakes Wildlife Unit, Columbia Basin Wildlife Area George, Grant County

Enjoy many opportunities for hiking and wildlife viewing in this geologically rich wildlife area. Trek along the base of 800-foot tall basalt cliffs and watch vultures ride the air currents far above the ancient pothole lakes.

3 George Creek Unit, Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Asotin, Asotin County

This wildlife area has high-quality shrubsteppe interspersed with steep rock canyons and rivers. Find opportunities to see bighorn sheep, deer, songbirds, and wild turkey.

4 Revere Wildlife Area Lamont, Whitman County

Habitat varies in this wildlife area, from Palouse grasslands to scabland habitats with seeps and springs. Look for a variety of animals, such as the American badger, coyote, quail, and hawks. Rock Creek flows through the unit, providing a much needed oasis in an otherwise dry landscape.

5 Central Ferry Canyon Unit, Wells Wildlife Area Brewster, Douglas County

Mule deer, jackrabbits, sharp-tailed grouse, and many bird species thrive in the Dyer Hill area. Pine forests mixed with shrubsteppe are a great place to explore. Interior roads can be used for recreational activities like horseback riding and hiking.

6 Potholes Reservoir Unit, Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Moses Lake, Grant County

Explore sand dunes, shrubsteppe, and wetlands while looking for mule deer, winter bald eagle, waterfowl, and amphibians. An ADA-accessible trail is a wonderful birding destination.

