

Nevada Facts and State Emblems

Vital Statistics

- **Population:** 2,700,551 (2010 Census)
 - **Rank:** 35th largest state (2010 Census)
- **Capital:** Carson City, population - 55,274 (2010 Census)
- **Most populous city:** Las Vegas, population - 583,756 (2010 Census)
- **Most populous county:** Clark County, population - 1,951,269 (2010 Census)
- **Area:** 109,781 square miles
 - **Rank:** 7th largest (87 percent of Nevada's land area is federally controlled)
- **Highest elevation:** Boundary Peak in Esmeralda County - 13,140 feet
- **Lowest elevation:** On the Colorado River in Clark County - 470 feet

Nevada Nicknames

- Battle-Born State
- Sagebrush State
- Silver State

The origin of the state's name is Spanish, meaning "snow-capped."

Facts About Nevada

The presence of Nevada's earliest inhabitants, beginning about 12,400 years ago, is marked by many petroglyphs and archaeological sites. Baskets, decoys, and ingenious traps are evidence of the resourcefulness of these early people in a harsh and arid environment.

European explorers traveled through Nevada in the early 19th century, but it was not until 1851 that the first settlements were established. An Act of Congress created the Territory of Nevada on March 2, 1861. James W. Nye of New York was appointed Nevada's first Territorial Governor by President Abraham Lincoln later that year. On October 31, 1864, President Lincoln proclaimed Nevada's admission to the Union as the 36th state. The State's first elected Governor, Henry Blasdel, took office on December 5, 1864.

Today, Nevada is the nation's seventh largest state in land area. Several hundred mountain ranges cross its landscape, many with elevations over 10,000 feet. In contrast, the State's lowest point (along the Colorado River) is only 470 feet above sea level. From majestic mountains to desert valleys, nature has endowed Nevada with diverse and unique ecosystems.

The Nevada Legislature has honored the State's natural resources and cultural heritage with a variety of State designations described below.

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Nevada State Emblems

State Seal ([NRS 235.010](#))

In mid-1864, Nevada's Constitutional Convention adopted a description of the features to be placed on Nevada's Great Seal. The Territorial Legislature had approved the description of the seal for the Territory of Nevada on November 29, 1861. The Territorial Seal included the motto "Volens et Potens," which means "Willing and Able," expressing the ideas of loyalty to the Union and the mineral wealth to sustain it.



On February 24, 1866, the Legislature changed the motto on the seal to "All for Our Country." In 1969, Nevada Revised Statutes 235.010 was amended by Assembly Bill 157 to make the legal description conform to the actual features of the seal.

The design of The Great Seal of the State of Nevada is described as follows: In the foreground, there are two large mountains, at the base of which, on the right, is located a quartz mill, and on the left, a tunnel, penetrating the silver leads of the mountain, with a miner running out a carload of ore, and a team loaded with ore for the mill. Immediately in the foreground, there are emblems indicative of the agricultural resources of the State including a plow, a sheaf, and a sickle. In the middle ground, there is a railroad train passing a mountain gorge and a telegraph line extending along the line of the railroad. In the extreme background, there is a range of snow-clad mountains, with the rising sun in the east. Thirty-six stars (to signify Nevada as the 36th state to join the Union) and the motto, "All for Our Country," encircle the entire illustration. In an outer circle, the words "The Great Seal of the State of Nevada" are engraved, with "Nevada" at the base of the seal and separated from the other words by two groups of three stars each.

In 1999, the Nevada Legislature formally defined in the Nevada Revised Statutes the colors of the seal, including the yellow band highlighting the words "All for Our Country."

Two large metal versions of the seal may be found on both the north and south exterior faces of the Legislative Building, a gift from the Government of Taiwan to the Nevada Legislature. Taiwan was designated as Nevada's sister state in 1985.

State Flag ([NRS 235.020](#))

Nevada has had four flags in its history. The Legislature did not adopt the design of the first flag until 1905, more than 40 years after Nevada entered the Union. Governor John Sparks and Colonel Henry Day of Carson City, a member of the Governor's staff, designed this flag. It had a blue background with the words "Nevada" in the center, "silver" at the top, and "gold" at the bottom. Thirty-six silver and gold stars represented that Nevada was the 36th state admitted to the Union.



In 1915, the State Legislature repealed the 1905 Flag Act and created a new official flag, which was much different from the original. Clara Crisler of Carson City designed the new flag. It had a blue background with the State seal in the center. The design featured 18 gold stars arranged around the

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word "Nevada," and 18 silver stars below the words "All for Our Country." Again, the 36 stars indicated that Nevada was the 36th state admitted to the Union. When Miss Crisler added an extra star for a total of 37, the meaning of the stars was lost. This flag now hangs in the Nevada State Museum located in Carson City.

The Legislature adopted the design of Don Louis Shellback III for the third flag in 1929. The background color of the flag remained blue, but the flag's design changed dramatically. Two sprays of sagebrush crossed to form a wreath in the upper left portion of the flag. A five-pointed star appeared at the center of the wreath with "Nevada" spelled out between the points of the star. A scroll with the motto "Battle Born" signified that Nevada entered the Union during the Civil War.

The 1991 Legislature approved a bill, sponsored by Senator William J. Raggio, to alter the way that "Nevada" is depicted on the State flag. Since October 1, 1991, the name "Nevada" has been positioned underneath instead of interspersed between the points of the star. Verne R. Horton created the current design of the flag.

State Colors: Silver and Blue ([NRS 235.025](#))

State Song: "Home Means Nevada" ([NRS 235.030](#))

In 1933, the Legislature adopted "[Home Means Nevada](#)" as the official state song. Mrs. Bertha Raffetto of Reno wrote the song to honor the State. The refrain of the song is as follows:

"Home" means Nevada, "Home" means the hills,
"Home" means the sage and the pines.
Out by the Truckee's silvery rills,
Out where the sun always shines,
There is a land that I love the best,
Fairer than all I can see.
Right in the heart of the golden west
"Home" means Nevada to me.

(Special thanks to Mrs. Alami's and Paragini's 3rd Grade classes at Greenbrae Elementary for recording the state song.)

State March: "Silver State Fanfare" ([NRS 235.035](#))

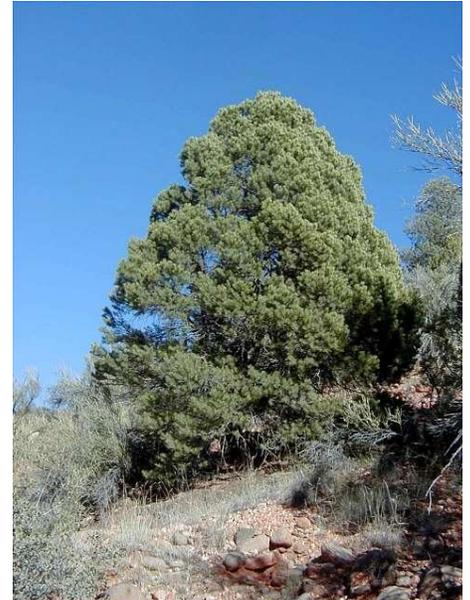
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State Trees:

Single-Leaf Piñon ([NRS 235.040](#))

The Single-Leaf Piñon (*Pinus monophylla*) is an aromatic pine tree with short, stiff needles and gnarled branches. The tree grows in coarse, rocky soils and rock crevices. Though its normal height is about 15 feet, the Single-Leaf Piñon can grow as high as 50 feet under ideal conditions.

Image credit: [naturesongs.com](#).



Bristlecone Pine ([NRS 235.040](#))

The Bristlecone Pine (*Pinus longaeva*) is the oldest living thing on Earth, with some specimens in Nevada more than 4,000 years old. The tree can be found at high elevations. Normal height for older trees is about 15 to 30 feet, although some have attained a height of 60 feet. Diameter growth continues throughout the long life of the tree, resulting in massive trunks with a few contorted limbs.

Image credit: [nevadaheritage.com/nevada_facts/](#).



State Flower: Sagebrush ([NRS 235.050](#))

The Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* or *trifida*) grows abundantly in the deserts of the western U.S. A member of the wormwood family, sagebrush is a branching bush (1 to 12 feet high) and grows in regions where other kinds of vegetation cannot subsist. Known for its pleasant aroma, gray green twigs, and pale yellow flowers, sagebrush is an important winter food for sheep and cattle.

Image credit: Ed Kleiner at [comstockseed.com](#).



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State Grass: Indian Ricegrass ([NRS 235.055](#))

Indian Ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*), once a staple food source for Nevada Indians, now provides valuable feed for wildlife and range livestock. This tough native grass, which is found throughout the State, is known for its ability to reseed and establish itself on sites damaged by fire or overgrazing.

Image credit: [TribalWisdomFoundation.org](#).



State Bird: Mountain Bluebird ([NRS 235.060](#))

The Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) lives in the Nevada high country and destroys many harmful insects. It is a member of the thrush family, and its song is a clear, short warble like the caroling of a robin. The male is azure blue with a white belly, while the female is brown with a bluish rump, tail, and wings.

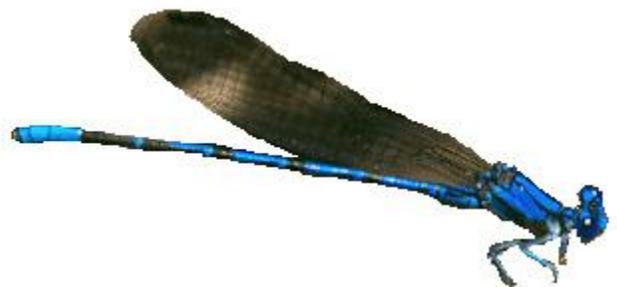
Image credit: Terry Sohl.



State Insect: Vivid Dancer Damselfly ([NRS 235.062](#))

The Vivid Dancer Damselfly (*Argia vivida*) is abundant in springs and ponds in all four regions of Nevada. The adult male is a rich blue with clear wings that appear silver when rapidly beating in sunlight, while most females are tan or tan and gray.

Image credit: Ann Johnson.



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State Reptile: Desert Tortoise ([NRS 235.065](#))

The Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) lives in the extreme southern parts of Nevada. This reptile spends much of its life in underground burrows to escape the harsh summer heat and winter cold. It can live to be more than 70 years old.

Image credit: DK1 Images.



State Animal: Desert Bighorn Sheep ([NRS 235.070](#))

The Desert Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) is smaller than its Rocky Mountain cousin, but has a wider spread of horns. The bighorn is well-suited for Nevada's mountainous desert country because it can survive for long periods without water. The large rams stand about 4½ feet tall and can weigh as much as 175 pounds.

Image credit: Betsy Husband.



State Fish: Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ([NRS 235.075](#))

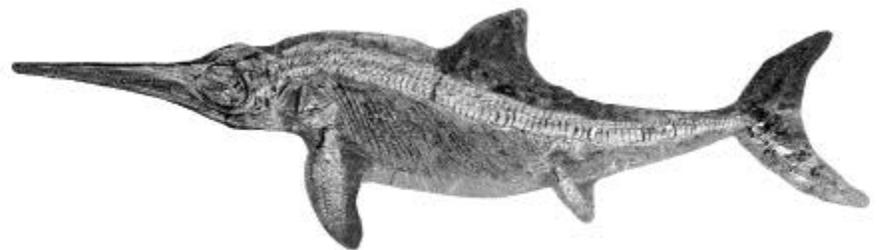
The Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (*Salmo clarki henshawi*), a native trout found in 14 of the State's 17 counties, is adapted to habitats ranging from high mountain creeks and alpine lakes to warm, intermittent lowland streams and alkaline lakes where no other trout can live.



Image credit: CLAN.

State Fossil: The Ichthyosaur ([NRS 235.080](#))

This fossil (*genus Shonisaurus*) was found in Berlin, east of Gabbs. Nevada is the only state to possess a complete skeleton (approximately 55 feet long) of this extinct marine reptile. Ichthyosaurs (a name meaning "fish lizards") were predatory reptiles that filled the same ecological niche as—and quite resembled in body form—the dolphins of today, only many of them were much larger.



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Image credit: Ryosuke Motani, Ph.D., Department of Geology, University of California.

State Artifact: Tule Duck Decoy ([NRS 235.085](#))

This decoy was created almost 2,000 years ago. Discovered by archeologists in 1924 during an excavation at Lovelock Cave, the decoys are formed of bundles of bulrush (tule) stems, bound together and shaped to resemble canvasback ducks.

Image credit: Scott Klette.



State Metal: Silver (Ag) ([NRS 235.090](#))

State Precious Gemstone: Virgin Valley Black Fire Opal ([NRS 235.100](#))

Among the many gemstones found in Nevada, the Virgin Valley Black Fire Opal is one of the most beautiful. The Virgin Valley in northern Nevada is the only place in North America where the Black Fire Opal is found in any significant quantity.

Image credit: Emily at crystal_cure.com.



State Semiprecious Gemstone: Nevada Turquoise ([NRS 235.110](#))

Sometimes called the "Jewel of the Desert," Nevada Turquoise is found in many parts of the State.

Image credit: Emily at crystal_cure.com.



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State Soil: Orovada Soil Series ([NRS 235.115](#))

Orovada soils are extensive in northern Nevada, where they have an area of more than 360,000 acres. They are common soils on semiarid rangeland with sagebrush grass plant communities. Orovada soils are arable when irrigated and are considered prime farmland. Alfalfa for hay and seed, winter wheat and barley, and grass for hay and pasture are the principal crops grown on these soils.

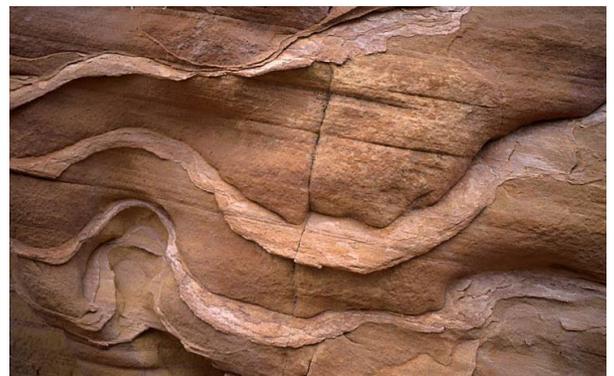
Image credit: [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(United States\)](#).



State Rock: Sandstone ([NRS 235.120](#))

In its more traditionally recognized form or as quartzite, sandstone is found throughout the State. In areas such as the [Valley of Fire State Park](#) and [Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area](#) (both near Las Vegas), it provides some of Nevada's most spectacular scenery. The State Capitol and the former U.S. Mint are built of sandstone.

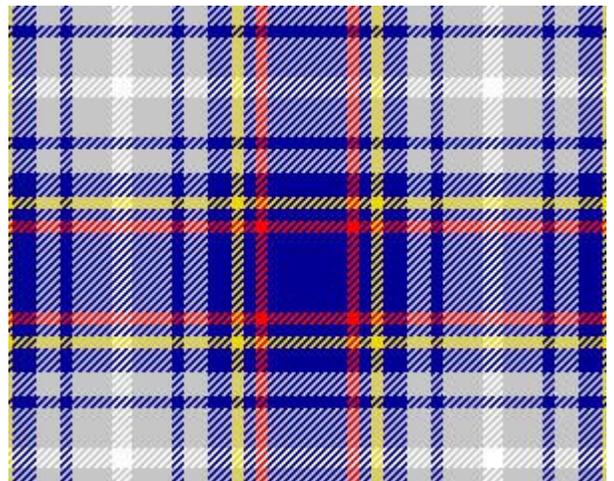
Image credit: [Carol Dempsey Photoseek.com](#).



State Tartan ([NRS 235.130](#))

Some colors of the tartan represent the following features that make Nevada a unique and bountiful state:

- Blue represents one of the state colors of Nevada, the pristine waters of Lake Tahoe and the Mountain Bluebird, the official state bird;
- Silver represents the other state color, the official state mineral, the granite composition of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, and the silver country of northern Nevada;
- Red represents the Virgin Valley Black Fire Opal, the official state precious gemstone, and the red rock formations of southern Nevada;
- Yellow represents Sagebrush, the official state flower, and symbolizes the Great Basin Region of central Nevada; and
- White represents the name of this state, meaning snow-covered, which is the translation of the Spanish word "nevada."



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State Locomotives: Engine No. 40 ([NRS 235.135](#))

The steam locomotive known as Engine No. 40 was built in 1910. Engine No. 40 is currently located in East Ely, Nevada.

Image credit: Engine No. 40
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