

# Northern Pygmy-Owl

*Glaucidium gnoma*

## Description

The Northern Pygmy-Owl is a small bird of prey that is 16-19 cm tall and weighs between 48-60 grams. It has a small head, stout and sturdy body, short rounded wings and a long tail. Females are slightly larger than males. This little owl is non-migratory (even in Alberta), and lives in mature or second growth woodlands that have open spaces (like meadows), as predator. The Northern Pygmy-Owl usually fly short distances, from perch to perch, just above the ground with a low rise and fall to their flight pattern. They hunt for small to medium sized birds (waxwings to chickadees) and small mammals (mice, moles, voles, chipmunks) and sometimes insects, and even small reptiles and amphibians. These owls must hunt and feed throughout the day in order to meet the needs of their small, but high energy consuming bodies. They are seasonally monogamous and raise 3-7 young after an incubation period of approximately 4 weeks. The young all hatch in one day and they fledge 3-4 weeks after hatching. What's unusual about these owls is that they are noisy flyers, not silent predators as you would expect. Because they don't eat large amounts of feather, fur and bones, their pellets are formed infrequently, are very small (3 cm), and fall apart quickly after discharge.

## FUN FACTS

- This little raptor has markings called false eyes that look like eyes on the back of their head to confuse predators.
- Northern Pygmy-Owls will cache their extra food by impaling them on thorns or hiding them in tree cavities.
- This fierce hunter can take down prey 3x its size including Flickers and Chickens.
- Although most owls have asymmetrically placed ears, this is not true of Northern-Pygmy-Owls.



If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal in distress, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at **403-214-1312** for tips, instructions and advice, or visit the website for more information [www.calgarywildlife.org](http://www.calgarywildlife.org)






Photo: Naturspicsonline

## Contact Us

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