

Richardson's Ground Squirrel

Urocitellus richardsonii

Description

Richardson's ground squirrels are known by many names in Alberta, including gopher and prairie dog. Richardson's ground squirrels are a keystone species in Alberta and are prey for many other species including predatory birds, mammals, and reptiles. These Alberta natives spend a good portion of their lives underground in elaborate burrow systems. These rodents are true hibernators, holing up underground for up to 7 months without food or water. To do this they eat large quantities of food during the spring and summer to develop a fat reserve; once they go into hibernation their heart and respiration rates drop dramatically, allowing them to conserve energy. Males go into hibernation by the end of July while female and juveniles go into hibernation in August.

FUN FACTS

- > Richardson's ground squirrels live in groups of related female kin.
- > Females raise their litters alone without help from mates and kin.
- > Richardson's ground squirrels have a lookout that alerts to danger.
- > Only 10-20% of young males will reach adulthood.

If you find an injured or orphaned wild bird or animal in distress, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at **403-239-2488**, for tips, instructions and advice, or look at the website at **www.calgarywildlife.org** for more information.



Photo: Tony LePrieur

Contact Us

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