

Burrowing Owl

Athene cunicularia

Description

The Burrowing Owl is one of the world's smallest owls. In Alberta, only the Northern Saw-whet and Northern Pygmy Owls are smaller, and all these little owls are migratory, coming north in the summer to breed. The Burrowing Owl adult is about the size of an adult pigeon and is very distinctive in appearance, behaviour and habitat, making it easy to distinguish from other owls. This bird is identifiable by its very long, un-feathered legs and a short, barred tail. It has a round head and distinctive white chin stripe, known as a strap, and have white eyebrow markings above their brilliant yellow eye. Their facial discs are poorly defined, especially in contrast to some of the larger owls, in particular, the barn owl. Their feathering is light brown and streaked with white. They live in short grassy plains and arid areas in old burrows that are stolen from ground squirrels, badgers or prairie dogs. They spend quite a bit of their time in their burrows (their young stay underground for about 3 weeks after hatching) and are most likely to be seen standing on guard at the burrow entrance.



FUN FACTS



- Burrowing Owls are social birds that nest in colonies; they communicate with colony mates with sounds inaudible to us.
- When mating or showing defensive behaviours they make sounds that mimic a rattlesnake.
- Burrowing Owls change their diet to match availability of food which can include mice, grasshoppers, and beetles.
- The Burrowing Owl is endangered due to habitat destruction, pesticide use and increased human activity.




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



Contact Us

 11555—85th Street NW, Calgary, AB T3R 1J3
 403-214-1312

 admin@calgarywildlife.org
 calgarywildlife.org

 @calgarywildlife
 @calgarywildlife
 @Calgary_wildlife