

BURROWING OWLS

QUICK FACTS

Name: Western Burrowing Owl

Scientific Name: *Athene cunicularia*

Average weight: 125-190 grams (after 6 weeks of age)

Average Wingspan: 20-24 inches

Average Height: 9 inches

Average Lifespan: 1-6 years in the wild and up to 12 years in captivity

National Status: Endangered throughout Canada (B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba)

Provincial Status: Endangered

Most Unique Characteristic: Burrowing Owls are the only ground dwelling owl, they nest in the ground



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Where are Western Burrowing Owls found?

Southern Canada during March-September (migratory population) through great plains into Central America. In Canada, they are mostly found in grazed pastureland and ranchland areas.

How do Burrowing Owls sound?

Males have a "cooo-cooo" call which they vocalize during the breeding season to attract a female.

Can Burrowing Owls dig their own nests?

No, Burrowing Owls rely on other digging mammals like foxes, badgers, and ground squirrels to dig burrows for them.

What do Burrowing Owls eat?

Mostly insects (80% of their diet), mice, shrews, voles, small birds, salamanders, frogs, and snakes. A family of burrowing owls can eat up to 1,800 small mammals and 7,000 insects in one season.

How many eggs (young) can one pair of Burrowing Owls have each breeding season?

A female Burrowing Owl can have up to 12 egg in one nest, which she incubates herself for 28-30 days while the male hunts and guards the entrance of the burrows.

When can a young Burrowing Owl fly?

Young Burrowing Owls emerge from the burrow after they are two weeks old, begin to hop, stretch and test out their wings between 4-5 weeks in age. After 6 weeks, they are fully grown and can fly and hunt on their own.

What challenges do Burrowing Owls face?

The greatest challenge (or limiting factor) for the Burrowing Owl in North America is the loss of habitat. Modern agriculture has eliminated much of their traditional habitat, this includes a reduction in burrows. The use of pesticides negatively affects owls and prey (insects and small mammals). Vehicle Collisions, predation, and migration also limit the survival of both adult and young Burrowing Owls.

How can you help?

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