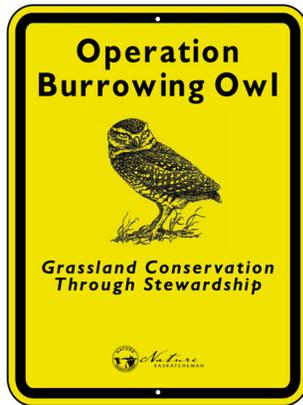


Operation Burrowing Owl

Habitat Conservation Through Landowner Stewardship

Operation Burrowing Owl (OBO), a Nature Saskatchewan program launched in 1987, protects Burrowing Owl habitat from cultivation, increases awareness of the owl, supports landowners, and monitors population changes. Landowners voluntarily agree to conserve grassland habitat for Burrowing Owls and other prairie wildlife.



Approximately 440 private and public landowners participate in OBO, and together are conserving over 21,000 ha (52,000 acres) of grassland habitat in pastures and other lands while continuing their regular land use practices. These landowners annually report the number of owls on their land.

If you are one of the few landowners with Burrowing Owls, or if you have prairie habitat that formerly supported owls, you have an important role in their survival. Every nest site is important to their recovery. Most OBO participants no longer have nesting owls, however their role in conserving habitat is essential if we are to see a population increase of these prairie ambassadors!



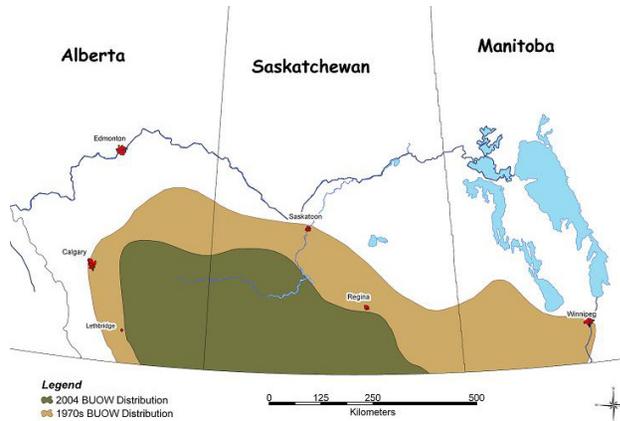
© Dan Johnson, Lethbridge

Did You Know?

Burrowing Owls love to eat mice and grasshoppers! **One nest of Burrowing Owls can eat 1,800 or more rodents and many more insects in a single year!**

Where are Burrowing Owls Found?

The Burrowing Owl, or Ground Owl, was once found across the open mixed grasslands and aspen parkland. It ranged from Winnipeg in the east, to Calgary in the west and Prince Albert in the north. The Burrowing Owl has disappeared from much of its former range and is now primarily found in the mixed grassland regions of Alberta and Saskatchewan.



Burrowing Owl Bits!

Burrowing Owls return to Saskatchewan from wintering areas in Texas and Mexico from mid-April to mid-May. They prefer to nest in grazed pastures, but on occasion will nest in cultivated land, hay fields, or roadside ditches if they find a good burrow.

Only 24 cm (9 inches) tall, male Burrowing Owls are often seen standing on mounds of dirt next to their burrows or on nearby fence posts while the females are underground incubating the 6 to 12 eggs.

In late June, young owls begin to explore the area outside their burrows, and congregate around the burrow entrance waiting to be fed by the parents. Young owls often move to nearby burrows when the nest burrow becomes overcrowded.

By August, the young owls have learned to fly and hunt and may move as far as 3 km from the nest area. Migration south occurs in September and October.

Did You Know?

The **American Badger** is a very important prairie species! Badgers **eat many rodent pests** such as ground squirrels, pocket gophers and mice, and serve as a **burrow provider** for the Burrowing Owl.



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How is the Burrowing Owl Faring?

The Burrowing Owl was once a common summer resident of the Canadian prairies. Over the last 20 years their population has declined around 93%. It is estimated that fewer than 600 owl pairs currently breed in Canada, with half of these in Saskatchewan.

The owl's decline has been attributed to changes in the prairie landscape. Over 75% of our native grassland has been cultivated, and 40% of our wetlands have been lost. Grassland that remains is often heavily fragmented. Habitat change has resulted in a lower survival rate for Burrowing Owl eggs and young.

Operation Burrowing Owl appreciates and recognizes the efforts of the many stewards who conserve habitat for Burrowing Owls.

Did You Know?

To successfully raise their young it is important for owls to have:

1. **nearby wetlands**, as these provide habitat for food, and
2. **many nearby burrows**, for owls to escape from their predators.

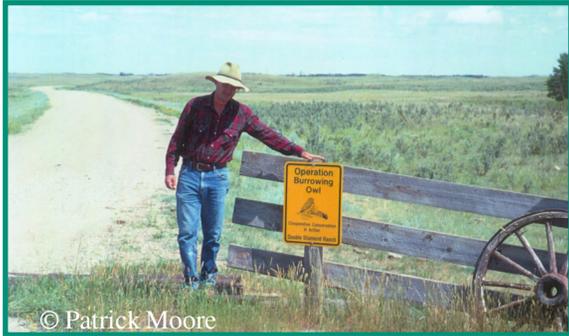


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For more information or to participate in Operation Burrowing Owl, please call 1-800-667-4668 (HOOT)!

The Importance of Prairie Landowners

Rural landowners play a key role in conserving our prairie habitat and maintaining healthy grasslands. Good stewardship arises because of their close ties to the land from which they derive their livelihood. We recognize that the health of the prairie ecosystem depends on good stewardship shown by landowners across Saskatchewan!



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We Work Together to Help You!

Education - Increase your knowledge of prairie conservation options and species at risk through informative materials and workshops.

Habitat Enhancement - Expand your pasture! Nature Saskatchewan offers a pasture expansion program to improve habitat for Burrowing Owls and other grassland species. You have more pasture and owls have improved habitat; a win-win situation for you and wildlife!

Conservation Easements - Leave a conservation legacy through a legal agreement to conserve the land you love!

What Do I Do if I Spot a Burrowing Owl?

Call **1-800-667-4668 (HOOT)**!

By reporting a sighting you are playing an important role in their survival and are helping to monitor the owl's population.

If you have a nesting Burrowing Owl, become an **Operation Burrowing Owl** steward!

Thank You to our Supporters!

- Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk
- World Wildlife Fund & Environment Canada — Endangered Species Recovery Fund
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Saskatchewan Environment — Fish and Wildlife Development Fund
- The EJLB Foundation
- Greencover Canada — Technical Assistance Component Program
- Environmental Careers Organization Canada
- US Fish and Wildlife Service — Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Program
- SaskEnergy
- SaskPower
- Human Resource Development Canada — Canada Summer Jobs Program
- Saskatchewan Environment Industry and Management Association — Green Team

And A Special Thanks To: OBO Landowners and Volunteers

*To learn more about
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Operation Burrowing Owl



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Landowner Stewardship*

To Report a Sighting
Call the HOOT Line:
1-800-667-4668



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