

# ALBERTA OWLS

## LARGE OWLS



**Barred Owl** *Strix varia*

Lives in mature mixedwood forests and nests in tree cavities. Has a distinctive “Who cooks for you?” call. Preys on a variety of small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.



**Great Gray Owl** *Strix nebulosa*

The tallest owl in Alberta, but is not as heavy as the Great Horned owl. Lives in mature coniferous forests, but will hunt in clearings, bogs, and meadows.



**Great Horned Owl** *Bubo virginianus*

One of the most common and widespread owls, found in wetlands, forests, grasslands and urban areas. Usually uses an old nest from hawks or ravens. Mostly active at night, but especially at dusk and before dawn.

**They are Albertas official bird, and is one of the only predators of skunks.**



**Snowy Owl** *Bubo scandiacus*

Lives in the Arctic tundra in the summer, and migrates to Alberta for the winter. Found in open spaces, hunting during the day time. Nests in a hollow scraped into the ground by the female.

## OWL CONSERVATION

- Owls are top predators and help control populations of rodents, including mice.
- Most owl populations are secure in their status, but some are Sensitive in Alberta, and the Burrowing Owl is Endangered in Canada. Conserving forest, grassland and open habitats is important for ensuring healthy owl populations.

## YOU CAN HELP OWLS

- Build a Saw-whet Owl nest box
- Dont use poison to control rodents, as owls (or other natural predators) may also become poisoned after eating them
- Plant trees to create habitat for owls
- Support owl habitat conservation through the Edmonton and Area Land Trust

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## MEDIUM OWLS



**Northern Hawk Owl** *Surnia ulula*

Lives in the boreal forest, nesting in tree cavities. Hunts by day and night in boreal forests, detecting prey mostly by sight.



**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

Lives in grasslands, fields and open areas. One of the few owls in the world to make a nest on the ground with grass and feathers.



**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*

Found throughout Alberta, but requires a combination of open country and dense forest for hunting and roosting.

## SMALL OWLS



**Northern Saw-whet Owl** *Aegolius acadicus*

Small and secretive nocturnal owl. Found in mature deciduous or coniferous forests. Nests in tree cavities or artificial nest boxes.



**Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia*

Nests in old prairie dog burrows in grasslands and open habitats in southern Alberta. They prey on insects, and small mammals.



**Boreal Owl** *Aegolius funereus*

Found in boreal and mountain forests. Nests in tree cavities or artificial nest boxes.

## OWL FACTS

- Owls do not build nests, but use tree cavities, abandoned nests of crows and hawks, or mammal burrows. Some also use artificial nest boxes or platforms.
- Owls swallow their food whole, and regurgitate a pellet of the inedible fur, feathers and bones a few hours later.
- Not all owls are nocturnal. Some are active during the day, and some are most active at dawn and dusk, referred to as crepuscular.
- The outer edge of owl feathers are soft, allowing them to fly almost silently.
- Some owls have asymmetrical ears on the sides of their heads, and feathers that help draw sound into their ears.