

CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT



Burrowing owl

Athene cunicularia

Conservation Status: Endangered in Canada

The Calgary Zoo, together with Environment and Climate Change Canada and Alberta Environment and Parks, is working to restore populations in the Canadian prairies using a conservation tool called head-starting.

Grassland Indicators

Burrowing owls have been a part of grassland ecosystems in North, Central, and South America for thousands of years. They nest in burrows created by other species and feed on insects, small mammals, and birds. Burrowing owls are an indicator species and reflect the health of the prairie ecosystems where they live.



Migration

Each year, these tiny owls make an incredible trek as they migrate from Canada to Mexico and the southern United States. Many owls don't return from this journey, but their fate is unclear. Burrowing owls face many challenges including habitat loss and fragmentation, increased predation, reduced prey availability, and severe weather.

Head-starting

Burrowing owls typically lay 9 eggs, but the youngest owlets don't often survive. To give these owlets a head-start, we care for them over winter and release them into the wild the following spring. Head-started owls are released in breeding pairs and equipped with satellite transmitters to track their movement and survival.



"Endangered species like burrowing owls need our help, and they need it now. Novel partnerships can be extremely powerful to enable science and trigger decisive action."

- Dr. Axel Moehrenschlager
Director of Conservation & Science, Calgary Zoo

Collaboration

We are proud to work together with local landowners to release burrowing owls on private ranchland in southern Alberta. We also work with the Department of National Defense to release owls on Canadian Forces Base Suffield.

The Calgary Zoological Society
1300 Zoo Road NE, Calgary, Alberta
Canada, T2E 7V6

Website
calgaryzoo.com

Phone
Toll Free: 1-800-588-9993
Main Switchboard: (403) 232-9300

