



WORKING TOGETHER
for the continued coexistence of prairie wildlife
and sustainable agriculture.

For More Information or if Interested in
Making a Donation, Please Contact:
6924 – 104 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 2L7
P. 780.437.2342 F. 780.438.6872
E. office@afga.org www.ogcsp.com

BROCHURE SUPPORTED BY:
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife
Foundation, Government of Canada Habitat
Stewardship Program, and the James L. Baillie
Memorial Fund of Bird Studies Canada with funds
raised through the annual Baillie Birdathon



SPECIES AT RISK

AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

ALBERTA FISH AND GAME ASSOCIATION

SPECIES AT RISK

AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Operation Grassland Community focuses much of its work on four species of birds across Alberta's grassland region: Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Sprague's Pipit, and Ferruginous Hawk. This guide will help you in discovering whether any of these bird species are relying on your land for raising their young.

USING THIS GUIDE

Status: Category of Species At Risk as designated by the non-government advisory organization 'COSEWIC' (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada).

Endangered: A wildlife species facing imminent extirpation (no longer exists in the wild in Canada, but exists elsewhere) or extinction (no longer exists).

Threatened: A wildlife species that is likely to become endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction.

ID: Identification tips.

Habitat Requirements: Where the animal lives.

Nests: Where nests are found, and what they look like.

Foraging: Where the animal finds food; what the animal eats.

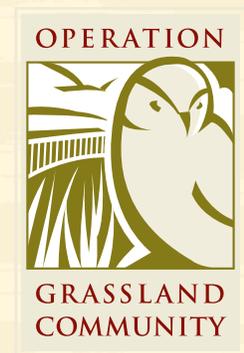
Area Requirements: Amount of space one 'family' requires.

WHAT TO DO?

If you have any of these important grassland bird species on your property, it means that you are already a great steward of your land; the activities you are currently carrying out are compatible with these species' habitat needs.

For more information on how to maintain these bird species on your land for the long-term or for possible financial incentives for habitat enhancement projects, please contact Operation Grassland Community at the Alberta Fish and Game Association office:

780-437-2342 | office@afga.org | www.ogcsp.com



WORKING TOGETHER
for the continued coexistence of prairie wildlife
and sustainable agriculture.

For More Information or if Interested in
Making a Donation, Please Contact:
6924 – 104 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 2L7
P. 780.437.2342 F. 780.438.6872
E. office@afga.org www.ogcsp.com

BURROWING OWL

Status: Endangered

ID: Small body. Long legs. Brown and white barring on entire body. Darker back and wings.

Habitat Requirements

Nests: Existing burrows of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, badgers, or foxes in pastures and native prairie that is grazed by livestock. The owls prefer short/sparse vegetation around nests that grazers provide because it enables them to watch for predators. Use livestock manure to line their burrows.

Foraging: Owls avoid cropland, preferring idle fields or pasture. While they prefer their nest sites to be well grazed, they choose areas with taller vegetation nearby. Tall vegetation provides better conditions for their prey (e.g., where mice and voles are found in highest numbers).

Area Requirements: Home ranges vary from 8 to 481 ha (20-1200 acres) depending on food availability.



Adult Burrowing Owl
Photo: Troy Wellicome, CWS



Juvenile Burrowing Owls

FERRUGINOUS HAWK

Status: Threatened

ID: Largest prairie hawk. Has dark and light phases. Both have bright yellow upper beaks.

Light phase - Brown/red legs, white chest and neck. Brown/red on back, wings, and legs.

Dark phase (less common) - Dark brown body. White wing tips and tail.

Habitat Requirements

Grasslands, including native and tame grasslands, pastures, and hay lands. Areas of Alberta with >50% cultivation receive limited use.

Nests: Build stick nests on or near the ground, in trees, and artificial platforms. Ground squirrels make up 90% of diet in Alberta. Grazing is beneficial as it reduces vegetative cover and increases visibility of ground squirrels.

Area Requirements: 1 km² (250 acres) suggested as minimum area requirement.



Ferruginous Hawk, light phase
Photo: Lois Gilchrist



Ferruginous Hawk family
Photo: Randy McCulloch



Ferruginous Hawk, light phase
Photo: Randy McCulloch



Ferruginous Hawk, light phase
Photo: Lois Gilchrist

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Status: Threatened

ID: Robin-sized, predatory songbird. Dark gray back and head. Whitish underparts. Black band across eye and on wings.

Habitat Requirements

Open grassland interspersed with trees or shrubs (such as thorny buffaloberry, willow, and common caragana) for nesting, perching, and impaling prey (secure prey on thorns and sharp branches for storage and to help the shrike tear the food for consumption as they lack talons). Shrikes are often found in wind-rows, and active or abandoned yard sites that have suitable shrub/tree species.

Nests: Nest in shrubs and trees (grazing is therefore tolerated as long as shrubs are protected against cattle grazing and rubbing).

Foraging: Areas of moderately grazed mixed-grass prairie for insects, and in taller grass (>20 cm) for small mammals.

Diet: Insects such as crickets, grasshoppers, and beetles, but also small mammals, birds, and amphibians.

Area Requirements: Average territory size in Alberta is 8.5 ha (21 acres).



Adult Loggerhead Shrike
Photo: Randy McCulloch



Loggerhead Shrike nest
Photo: Lea Craig-Moore, CWS



Juvenile Loggerhead Shrike
Photo: Randy McCulloch

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT

Status: Threatened

ID: Small songbird with brown and white streaked plumage. White edges on tail feathers. Males have high pitched, descending flight song most often heard high in the sky. In fact, males will sing up to 100 m (330 ft) in the air!

Habitat Requirements

Native mixed-grass prairie of moderate height with little or no woody vegetation. Cultivated lands, or native prairie that has been replaced by smooth brome or crested wheatgrass receive limited use. Sprague's Pipits have earned the nickname *Goldilocks* of the grassland birds because they require vegetation that is not too tall/dense or short/sparse, but "just right"!

Nests: At base of a tussock of grass in an area with dense and relatively tall grasses and sedges; usually covered in a dome of woven grass.

Foraging: In areas with grass several centimeters tall. Primarily insectivorous, eating beetles, grasshoppers, spiders, ants, and moth larvae.

Area Requirements: The minimum area requirement is 64 ha (165 acres).



Adult Sprague's Pipit
Photo: Stephen Davis, CWS



Juvenile Sprague's Pipit
Photo: Ryan Fisher



Nestlings
Photo: Leah Kovatch