

# Raptors



Prairie Falcon

Gordon Court

MULTISAR focuses on these raptors that are designated as species at risk in Alberta:

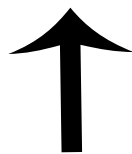
- Ferruginous Hawk - At Risk (Endangered)
- Prairie Falcon - Sensitive (Special Concern)
- Swainson's Hawk - Sensitive
- Golden Eagle - Sensitive

Some raptors are migratory and are only in Alberta for their breeding season. Most prairie raptors require large tracts of native prairie for hunting and nesting. The ferruginous hawk will nest on the ground if trees are scarce and short-eared owls are ground nesters. Raptors can also be found on cliffs, slopes and trees in riparian areas. The main food source for many raptors are richardson's ground squirrels, commonly known as gophers. They also eat mice, voles, rabbits and small birds. Burrowing owls are also migratory raptors but they are included in the 'Burrowing Animals BMP Factsheet'.

## General Life Cycle

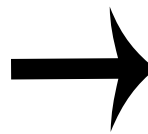
### March - May

Migrate back to Alberta, find mate and build nest in tree, on ground or along cliff. Lay eggs and incubate them. Parents may abandon nest if disturbed. Need short grass to spot prey. Ground nesters need tall grass to hide in.



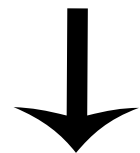
### August - October

Migrate south for winter. Short-eared Owls have been known to overwinter in Alberta.



### May - June

Eggs hatch around same time as young ground squirrels emerge from burrows. Young of some raptors are raised mainly on ground squirrel diet. Need low grass to spot prey.



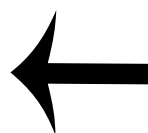
### July - August

Young learn to fly and leave nest. Predation of young is high and many do not survive.



Gordon Court

Golden Eagle



# Beneficial Management Practices

## General:

- Maintain woody areas, including dead trees, shelter-belts and especially lone trees. Replace dead trees with native species such as cottonwoods.
- Do not approach nests within 1000m between March 15 and July 15.
- Tolerate richardson's ground squirrels (gophers) if they are not causing excessive damage. They are the main food source for ferruginous hawks, swainson's hawks and prairie falcons. Poison is especially harmful as it can kill wildlife other than ground squirrels; use only once raptors have left the area (November - March).



The best decision you can make for all species at risk is to preserve your native grasslands.

## For Grazed Land:

- Avoid grazing on native prairie between March to late May or even July 15th if possible.
- Create variability in the pasture. A range of grass heights and litter cover is desirable.
- Restrict grazing in woody and riparian areas by fencing off or using salt blocks and watering sites to attract livestock elsewhere.
- Allow periods of rest after grazing.
- Remove low yielding land from production and seed back to native grasses or to permanent cover for use as a tame pasture.

## Industrial Guidelines:

- Ask companies to abide by set back distances and time restrictions:
  - For ferruginous hawks, prairie falcon, golden eagle: 1000m setback around nests from March 15 to July 15 and for any human structures and/or ground disturbance; 50m the rest of the year for low disturbance activities.
  - For short-eared owl: Nest sites from April 1 to July 31 use 200m setback for all disturbances.

Ferruginous Hawk  
By Corey Skiftun

For more information see the MULTISAR Grazing BMP Factsheet and the MULTISAR Industrial Guidelines Factsheet in your binder or online at [www.multisar.ca](http://www.multisar.ca).



## Contact:

MULTISAR  
2nd Floor, YPM Place  
530 - 8th Street South  
Lethbridge, Alberta  
T1J 2J8

[www.multisar.ca](http://www.multisar.ca)

Brandy Downey - Program Coordinator  
403-381-5526

Brad Downey - Lethbridge Biologist  
403-382-4364

Danielle Cross - Medicine Hat Biologist  
403-528-5209