

Burrowing Owls Get a Boost From Ranchers

By Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program

The new Burrowing Owl Alliance website, burrowingowlalliance.ca, is a practical new resource for ranchers and grassland conservation across Western Canada. It brings together regional experts, landowner tools, incentive information, and easy ways to report Burrowing Owl sightings.

The message is simple: cattle and Burrowing Owls belong together. Grazing helps maintain the short-grass habitat owls need to spot predators and hunt insects and small mammals. Productive working grasslands can support livestock while providing vital habitat for wildlife.

The site includes a Landowner Manual and Landowner Card with practical recommendations for active pastures. These include protecting the burrowing mammals—such as badgers, ground squirrels, and foxes—that create the underground homes owls rely on; delaying haying in selected areas until young owls have fledged; and avoiding insecticides and poisons that reduce or contaminate the owls' food supply.

Landowners can also explore regional incentives that may support conservation projects, including Ducks Unlimited programs, MUTISAR, the On-Farm Climate Action Fund, the Prairie Watersheds Climate Program, and Farmland Advantage. The website also shares guidance on wildlife-friendly fencing that keeps livestock secure while reducing risks for low-flying owls and other grassland birds.

Ranchers are the eyes on the ground across our grasslands. The “Have you seen an owl?” reporting tool helps recovery partners understand where owls are present and connects landowners with voluntary support; reporting a sighting does not create land-use restrictions.

One Burrowing Owl family can consume thousands of insects and small mammals in a breeding season. Visit burrowingowlalliance.ca to find resources, incentives, local contacts, and reporting information.



Photo credit: April Stampe

Thank You, Aidyn!

Last month, the Souris River Watershed District said goodbye—for now—to our fantastic summer student, Aidyn Robb, as he wrapped up his time as our Watershed Assistant.

Aidyn brought enthusiasm, hard work, and a genuine love for the outdoors to every task. Throughout the summer, he collected water samples, assisted with nutrient runoff monitoring, helped maintain green spaces, and supported day-to-day watershed projects.



His field work contributed to SRWD's efforts to better understand how water and nutrients move across the landscape. This information helps guide projects that protect local creeks, wetlands, rivers, and lakes while supporting healthy soils, productive farms, wildlife habitat, and resilient communities.

Aidyn has now returned to Assiniboine College to continue his studies in Land and Water Management. His time with SRWD provided valuable hands-on experience to complement his classroom learning, and we are excited to see where his education takes him.

Please join us in thanking Aidyn for his dedication, positive energy, and contributions this summer. Best of luck with your studies. Aidyn—your future is bright!

Did you know the Souris River Watershed has its own “climate memory,” written in tree rings and old river channels?

Long before weather apps and satellites, the landscape recorded floods, droughts, fires, and storms. Tree rings can grow wider in favourable growing years and narrower when conditions are dry, cold, or otherwise stressful, creating a timeline of past climate in the wood. Scientists have used tree-ring records around the Souris River Basin to study long-term changes in precipitation, including periods of extended drought and wetter conditions.

Old oxbows, abandoned river channels, and buried wetland soils offer more clues. They can show where water once flowed or pooled and how the watershed has shifted with climate and land use over decades and centuries. This natural record helps researchers and watershed planners understand past extremes and better prepare for the future with wetland restoration, buffer strips, and resilient land-management practices. The Souris River Basin has experienced both severe droughts and major flooding, including record-setting rains and flooding in 2011.



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/srwd_mb



Souris River Watershed District

DELORAINÉ OFFICE

102 Broadway Street South

(204) 747-2530

RESTON OFFICE

404 4th Street

(204) 877-3020