

FORTISALBERTA QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO LARGE RAPTORS

PHOTOS COURTESY: G. ROMANCHUK, T. KEMPER, J. GROVES, & G. COURT

EAGLES

BALD EAGLE



- Very large raptor; adults (5y+) have **white head & tail**, and yellow bill; **juveniles (<4yr) are mostly dark brown** with some white mottling and a dark bill.
- Juvenile bald eagles can be differentiated from golden eagles because **the 1-2" of leg above the top of the foot is BARE** on bald eagles (see photo, left)
- RANGE: widespread across Alberta near trees and fish-bearing waterbodies. Less common in southeast Alberta. Most migrate south for the winter.

GOLDEN EAGLE



- **Almost entirely brown**; adults have golden wash over head and neck
- Feathering on legs goes all the way to the top of the feet
- RANGE: open grasslands and semi-open mountainous areas in southeast and southwest Alberta. Less common in central Alberta.
- Many stay in Alberta year-round.

OWLS

GREAT HORNED OWL



- Large, mottled grey to brown owl with **horizontal streaks** on breast and **prominent "ear tufts"**
- Yellow eyes, dark bill
- Active at night; commonly use power poles for hunting or eating prey
- RANGE: occur in almost all habitat types across province. In Alberta year-round.

GREAT GREY OWL



- Large, mottled grey owl with yellow eyes, a rounded head, and **prominent facial disks**
- Most active at dawn & dusk
- RANGE: in or near treed areas in southwest, central, and northern Alberta year-round

SNOWY OWL



- Large, **mostly white owl** with yellow eyes. Often has **dark barring** on feathers.
- Usually hunt during the day but sometimes at night
- RANGE: Semi-open grassland or agricultural habitats in central to southern Alberta; Only in Alberta approximately October-March

HAWKS & OSPREY



FERRUGINOUS HAWK (STATUS: ENDANGERED)

- Large hawk with **rust-colored head and back**, whitish underparts, and chestnut colored legs
- **ENDANGERED SPECIES in Alberta**
- RANGE: open grasslands in southeast AB west to the foothills; In AB March-October



SWAINSONS HAWK

- Med-large hawk. Color variable but often has a **white chin and brown “bib”** with a whitish belly.
- RANGE: prefer open grassland or agricultural areas; in AB March – October



RED TAILED HAWK

- Med-large hawk. Color variable but most have white chest with dark mottling or a **dark “belly band”**. Adults (3y+) have **brick red tails**.
- Very common; in AB March-October
- RANGE: occur in open areas with some woodlots or trees nearby



OSPREY

- **White head with dark brown stripe leading from eye to neck**; dark back and wings, with white throat, chest and belly (often with streaking on belly)
- Often nests on power poles close to fish-bearing waterbodies
- In AB March-October
- RANGE: widespread across Alberta near trees and fish-bearing waterbodies. Less common in

FALCONS



PEREGRINE FALCON (STATUS: THREATENED)

- Medium sized falcon with dark top of head, back of neck, and cheeks (to look like a **dark hood**)
- Bluish-grey back and top of wings; pale throat and chest; **horizontal bars on belly**
- **In Alberta April-October**
- RANGE: found throughout much of AB along river valleys, lakes, agricultural areas & urban areas



PRAIRIE FALCON

- Large falcon with **single, thin, dark stripe from eye down the cheek**; light underparts with brown spotting; dark grayish-brown back
- **In AB March-October**
- RANGE: found in or near river canyons, valleys, and open prairie



GYRFALCON

- Large falcon with grey back; **chest is whitish with dark barring**, usually up to the neck
- **In Alberta November-March**
- RANGE: found in or near river canyons, valleys, and open prairie

