



Richardson's Ground Squirrel



City of
Saskatoon

For more information on
urban wildlife in Saskatoon visit
saskatoon.ca/wildlifemanagement
or contact Urban Biological Services
at 306-975-3300.



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Richardson's Ground Squirrel Characteristics

Appearance

- Fur is brown and lighter on the underside.
- Weight varies considerably throughout the year. At emergence, ground squirrels weigh 200-400 g (0.44-0.88 lbs) and will grow up to 750 g (1.6 lbs) by the time they are ready to hibernate.

Behaviour & Habitat

- Native to the prairie provinces and common in urban areas.
- Known to flick their tails as they retreat into their burrow.
- Have the common nickname 'gophers'.
- Burrows are grouped closely together in colonies.
- Their burrowing behaviour creates hazards in sports fields, golf courses, parks and open spaces. They are also known to dig burrows under and beside structures including sidewalks and patios.
- Males emerge from hibernation in March and establish territories prior to the females emerging a few weeks later.
- Females produce one litter per year, litter size ranges from 6 to 14 pups.
- Pups are born in April or May and remain in their burrows for 30 days, emerging in late May to mid-June.
- Adults hibernate as early as July, although in their first year, ground squirrels may not hibernate until September.
- They have a number of predators in Saskatoon including badgers, coyotes, hawks, weasels and foxes.

Diet

- Richardson's ground squirrels are omnivores, eating seeds, nuts, grains, grasses and insects.
- Feeding on annuals and perennials can be problematic in urban areas, although the more common concern is the damage caused by their burrows.

Co-existing with Richardson's Ground Squirrels

Advice for Residents

Richardson's ground squirrels are unlikely to form colonies and be problematic in residential yards. Co-existing is an option but there may be circumstances where ground squirrels need to be controlled. Consult home and garden centres for more advice on managing ground squirrels on private property.

Other ground squirrels and relatives in Saskatoon

Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel

- Common in Saskatoon
- Solitary or small colonies
- Smaller body size than Richardson's ground squirrel



Franklin's Ground Squirrel

- Rare in Saskatoon
- Solitary
- Larger body size than Richardson ground squirrel



Groundhog

- Rare in Saskatoon
- Solitary
- Much larger weighing 2-4 kg

