



Richardson's Ground Squirrel



For more information on
urban wildlife in Saskatoon visit
www.saskatoon.ca/wildlifemanagement
or contact City of Saskatoon Pest
Management at 306-975-3300.



Recognizing a Richardson's Ground Squirrel

Appearance

- Fur is dark brown and lighter on the underside
- Weight varies considerably throughout the year; at emergence ground squirrels weigh 200-400g (0.44-0.88 lbs) and 750 g (1.6 lbs) by the time they are ready to hibernate
- Body length is 30 cm (12 inches) long including the tail

Behaviour & Habitat

- Native to the prairie provinces and common in urban areas.
- Known to flick their tails as they retreat into their burrow, which is why Richardson's ground squirrels have the common nickname 'flickertails'.
- The burrows are grouped closely together in colonies.
- Their burrowing behaviour can create 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 before the females emerge a few weeks later.
- Females produce one litter per year, litter-size ranges from 6 to 14. The pups are born in April or May and remain in their burrows for 30 days. The pups emerge from natal burrows late May to mid-June.
- Adults may hibernate as early as July, although in their first year, ground squirrels may not hibernate until September.
- Richardson's ground squirrels 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 the 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 with ground squirrels 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 ground squirrel

Franklins Ground Squirrel

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

Groundhog

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

