

# Bird Symbols of Canada

## Part 9

### Alberta

#### Provincial Bird: Great-horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

According to the Canada Government website,<sup>1</sup> the Province of Albert adopted the Great-horned owl as its bird emblem in 1977, following a province-wide children's vote. This owl is an Alberta resident; and apparently its choice reflected concern about threatened wildlife, both in Alberta and worldwide.

The Alberta Legislature has endorsed the selection of the Great-horned owl in Statute:

Emblems of Alberta Act (Revised Statutes 2000):

*“Official bird 6. The bird known scientifically as *Bubo virginianus* and commonly known as the “great horned owl” is hereby adopted as the official bird of Alberta. RSA 1980 cE-8 s6”<sup>2</sup>*

The Great-horned owl is a native resident of North America, but can also be found in Central America and Southern parts of South America. Within North America, eBird Canada says of the Great-horned Owl:

*“Large and widespread owl with distinctive ear tufts. Found in a variety of habitats from dense woods to prairie and deserts with at least some trees. Also, found in wooded towns and suburbs. Typically, well-camouflaged dark brown overall, but varies in color. Often engages in haunting duets, with males and females hooting back and forth. Preys upon a variety of animals, including mammals, birds and reptiles.”<sup>3</sup>*

Canada Post has issued two stamps to mark the Great-horned Owl. These are:

#### 1986 Birds of Canada



Image source: [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/provincial-territorial-symbols-canada/alberta.html#a72>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E06.cfm&leg\\_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779775682](https://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E06.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779775682)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ebird.org/canada/species/grhowl>

This is a single stamp from a set of four stamps on the theme of “Birds of Canada”. The other stamps featured the Great Grey Heron, Snow Goose and the Spruce Grouse. Canada Post subsequently issued further sets of four stamps on this theme entitled “Birds of Canada” in each year from 1999 through to 2001<sup>4</sup>.

In 2016, Canada Post issued the first of three mini-sheets containing five stamps which marked the Provincial Birds of Canada. Here is the FDC from this issue, which features the Great-horned Owl on the cover artwork:

### 2016 [Provincial] Birds of Canada



Image source: <https://www.canadapost.ca/>

The Canadian Wildlife Federation provides some interesting background information on the Great-horned Owl, notably:

- It is one of Canada’s commonest large birds of prey;
- It is Canada’s second largest owl, behind the Snowy Owl;
- The female Owl is considerably larger than the male;
- It hunts at night, in a range that is roughly eight to 10 square kilometres;
- It customarily takes over the previous year’s nest of another raptor, crow or magpie;
- Its diet covers a wide range, feeding on medium sized mammals, birds, hares and rabbits where available; and also, mice and voles;
- Shootings and collisions with power lines are the main causes of premature death. Otherwise, the Great-horned Owl can live to a good age; and
- It is resistant or tolerant to habitat disturbance by humans<sup>5</sup>.

There is a wide range of stamps that are available which feature the Great-horned Owl. Unfortunately, many of these are from postal authorities which represent countries where you would never see the Great-horned Owl: for example, in Africa or in the Pacific.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.birdtheme.org/country/canada.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/encyclopedias/fauna/birds/great-horned-owl.html>

Eliminating the extraneous issues, leaves you with a list of around 10-12 stamps that feature the Great-horned Owl, from countries where the bird is native. Examples of these include the following:

### 1935 Honduras - Emblems/Symbols of Honduras



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

This stamp comes from a set of nine stamps featuring emblems or symbols of Honduras. I'm replying here on the judgement of [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org) and [www.bird-stamps.org](http://www.bird-stamps.org) that the blurred image on this stamp is a Great-horned Owl. My eyesight isn't that good - even with spectacles and a magnifying glass - to make the distinction. But I thought that it was a good idea to include a "classic" stamp rather than just limit this selection to modern ones.

### 1968 Uruguay - Birds



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

This is one from a set of two bird stamps, with three others of a similar design issued on two other occasions during the year 1968.

### 1986 Nicaragua - Birds



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

This stamp is from a set of seven bird stamps.

### 1979 Guatemala – Wildlife Conservation (Airmail Stamps)



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

This is one stamp from a set of five on wildlife conservation.

### 1995 El Salvador – Wildlife of Montecristo



Image source: [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org)

This stamp is from a sheetlet of 10 stamps, arranged in five rows of two stamps, with the artwork covering each pair of stamps. Opposite the Owl is the Kingajou (*Potos flavus*), a tropical rainforest mammal that colloquially is also known as the “honey bear”. The 10<sup>th</sup> stamp in this sheet features a Magnificent Hummingbird (*Eugenes fulgens*).

### 2001 Suriname – Fauna: Birds



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

This stamp is from a set of two on fauna – birds. The other value (f 4500) shows a Collared Plover (*Charadrius collaris*).