***Native Prairie Speaker Series***

**Title:** Influence of human development on burrowing owl habitat selection and reproductive success

**Abstract:** The Canadian prairies have changed dramatically since European settlement. Over two thirds has been converted to cropland and more recently, petroleum development has introduced an extensive network of infrastructure (roads, well heads, etc.) and sensory disturbances (sound and light) to the landscape. It is thought that the decline of the Burrowing Owl is linked to these changes to the prairie landscape, but no single cause has yet been shown to be the culprit. I will summarize the results of my doctoral research where I tried to understand the relationship between this endangered owl and the landscape in which it lives. I will show the choices Burrowing Owls make when they arrive in the spring and decide what type of landscape in which to nest. This is important because they are stuck with the resources (food, perches, etc.) and predators that surround their nest while they try to raise a nest of owlets. I will also give a peak into the nocturnal lives of burrowing owls by showing where they spend their time at night. When the eggs hatch and there are many mouths to feed, they must make good choices about where to hunt in order to bring enough food back to the nest. Overall, I will explore how changes to the grasslands affect where they choose to nest and hunt and how these choices then affect their success in raising a brood of owlets.

**Biography:** Corey Scobie is the Assistant Curator of Ornithology at the Royal Alberta Museum. He recently completed his Ph.D. which focused on the effects of human development on burrowing owl movement patterns and reproductive success in the grasslands of Alberta and Saskatchewan. He has worked with species at risk on the grasslands for the past 15 years, most of which has focused on mitigating potential negative impacts of industrial development. Corey loves nature and embraces any opportunity to share his passion with others.