

THE BURROW GUARDIAN

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER
2010

THIS ISSUE

- ▶ Joining the Earth Island Team
- ▶ Restoring Habitat on Oregon Army Depot
- ▶ Owls and ignorance don't mix
- ▶ Meet our Volunteer Staff
- ▶ Plus more!



MISSION

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network

advocates for the protection and restoration of the Western Burrowing Owl and promotes the preservation and careful management of habitat to prevent loss, foster healthy populations, and maintain intact natural communities for an ecologically sound future.

Earth Island Institute has made a commitment to the preservation of burrowing owls in the San Francisco Bay Area, California and North America through the recent adoption of the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network (BOCN). In April 2010, Scott Artis, BOCN Founding Director, submitted a burrowing owl conservation plan to the Project Review Committee at Earth Island Institute for fiscal sponsorship and support. In July the Board of Directors announced their decision.

As a global 501(c)(3) organization with over 25 years experience in developing grassroots campaigns, Earth Island has the resources necessary to facilitate growth and aid our efforts in rehabilitating and preserving burrowing owls.

"The situation has evolved from a local issue to a California and North American-wide movement focused on restoring habitat, increasing populations and changing policies directly responsible for the species' decline," said Scott Artis.

"We have a great opportunity to transform the public into citizen scientists and conservationists as their sightings are essential in ensuring individual owls and colonies are being protected. Earth Island Institute is the logical next step as it will enable us to expand our programs and focus on our conservation activities."

BOCN is excited about this new partnership and is looking forward to bringing national and international awareness to a species that is on the decline in Canada, Mexico and the U.S.

Juveniles at Antioch Preserve

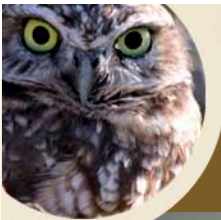


The 3 burrowing owl pairs residing in natural burrows at the Prewett Family Park Preserve fledged at least 19 young during the 2010 breeding season. In March, 30 volunteers installed 6 artificial burrows at this site.



P.O. Box 128
Brentwood, CA 94513

info@burrowing-owl.org
925.240.3399



Conversations



"In life some things get past us, the plight of the burrowing owl was one I knew little about but thanks to the great book HOOT by Carl Hiaasen and the efforts of Jimmy Buffett and myself we were able to bring their story to big screen for many to see and join in our efforts to protect."

Wil Shriner, Writer & Director

...thanks to Wil for talking with BOCN



Habitat Restoration Underway at Umatilla Chemical Depot - BOCN Staff Lends Hand

On August 23rd, the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network joined personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of British Columbia, the Global Owl Project, and the Umatilla Chemical Depot in a habitat restoration project. According to depot officials, coyotes were trapped in an effort to protect a transplanted herd of pronghorn antelope.

Unfortunately, the trapping process resulted in the loss of the badger population, which was responsible for digging burrows used by burrowing owls during breeding season. The disappearance of the badger population ultimately resulted in the dramatic decline of burrowing owls who could no longer find shelter amongst the Oregon army depot's ~20,000 acres.

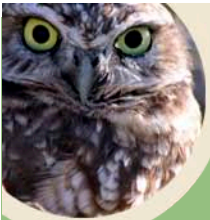
But thanks to the efforts of



David Johnson, Director of the Global Owl Project, and Don Gillis, Natural and Cultural Resources Manager for the Umatilla Chemical Depot, a restoration effort is in place to give migrating burrowing owls a place to rear young when they return to Oregon during breeding season in late April. To counteract the lack of natural burrows, we installed artificial ones using donated 55 gallon plastic Tree Top juice drums that were cut in half. Besides creating artificial burrows, a study has been implemented using geo-locators and bands to track both the adults and young. The idea is to create an area from which young owls can disperse to neighboring areas in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia and combat falling populations. It's an effort that BOCN is working to emulate here in California and other areas along western U.S.

During our 2 day stay in Hermiston, **we successfully installed 36 artificial burrows and are looking forward to tracking their use when owls return next year.** Through these efforts, David and Don are hoping to increase the breeding pairs to 50-60 in 2011 and beyond.





Spreading the Love!



Conservation means getting people and communities excited about burrowing owls. To help spread the word and remind people to keep an eye on their local owls, BOCN is passing out reminder bands to people of all ages. Be sure to ask for one when visiting us at your community event or when you see us in the field.

Who is Earth Island Institute?

"For 25 years, Earth Island Institute has been a hub for grassroots campaigns dedicated to conserving, preserving, and restoring the ecosystems on which our civilization depends."

Our Project Support program acts as an incubator for start-up environmental projects, giving crucial assistance to groups and individuals with new ideas for promoting ecological sustainability.

Since our founding, we have provided fiscal sponsorship to more than 100 projects around the globe."

- Earth Island Institute

Earth Island Institute

You are here.



Occupied Burrows Monitored Since February are Destroyed By Home Builder - USFWS Notified

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT! It's the classic example of why burrowing owl populations in the San Francisco Bay Area are continuing to decline and succumb to the pressures of habitat loss.

Active burrows that we have been monitoring since February, one of which protected the young of a successful breeding pair, were covered by erosion control fabric during preconstruction activities in Brentwood, CA.

In the approach of the summer months, land owners and developers felt the squeeze of fire suppression codes and regulations in Contra Costa County. By the end of June the weeds were mowed, the resident owls were happy and the first offspring were emerging from their burrows.

However, against all economic odds, construction was ready to roll even though nesting burrowing owls were occupying the site. As a precursor to



Photo: Scott Artis

construction activities and in an effort to abide by city erosion control regulations, the builder jumped the gun and installed a layer of black landscape fabric before a biological consultant stepped foot on the land. All burrows that were in an approximate 15-20 foot wide strip along the sidewalks were now effectively sealed. Any owls and young that retreated to these burrows for safety were trapped inside, and any eggs that littered the nest chamber were forcibly abandoned; a clear violation of federal and state laws.

BOCN notified the developer, the city, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the CA Department of Fish & Game in an effort to

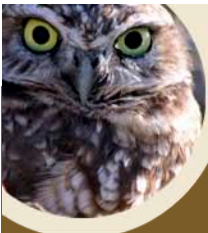
ensure protection of the remaining owls and young, and offer assistance in their preservation.

Federal Fish & Wildlife officials are investigating the incident and it highlights the need for increased educational outreach, monitoring, and conservation efforts by BOCN and our communities. Help support our work and report an owl sighting today.



It's Official...BOCN increases public awareness and introduces ourselves as a project under Earth Island at the Martinez Beaver Festival in August. Thanks to our friends at Worth A Dam!





Support Burrowing Owls in Your Neighborhood! T-shirts on the way

Larry Jordan, BOCN's Burrowing Owl Habitat Manager, has coordinated with graphic artist Jefferson Thomas on the design of our NEW shirts. Larry has sent the first batch into production, which will be ready to go by the second week in September. We're looking forward to seeing everyone showing their support for our work and burrowing owls with this FUN design. Details on placing your order will be posted to our website:

BurrowingOwlConservation.org



Meet the Volunteer Staff

Since this is our inaugural issue of The Burrow Guardian, we thought it appropriate to give a brief introduction on our dedicated, all volunteer staff...

Scott Artis, Founding Director - Scott has been monitoring and actively protecting western burrowing owls in Contra Costa County, while simultaneously working for policy changes at the state level. He is member of the Society for Conservation Biology and The Wildlife Society, including the Western Section and Public Conservation Education & Outreach Working Group. He is currently pursuing a Masters in Environmental Sciences and Policy.



Larry Jordan, Burrowing Owl Habitat Manager - Larry is a board member of the Wintu Audubon Society and the County Coordinator for the California Bluebird Recovery Program in Shasta County. He is currently in the process, with the help of a grant from California Audubon, of installing artificial burrows to help with the recovery of the Burrowing Owl in California. Larry is noted as a "Species Champion" for BirdLife International.



Dee Vieira, East County Program Manager - Dee has worked on burrowing owl habitats in Arizona and California, including the installation of artificial burrows and the successful release of owls. She spearheaded the allocation and development of a 24 acre burrowing owl preservation habitat at the Antioch Prewett Family Park. Through hard work she was integral in the establishment of Contra Costa County's first burrowing owl preserve as mitigation for displaced owls.



Heather Artis, Outreach Coordinator - Heather began her efforts by tracking, observing and actively protecting a colony of 11 resident owls that were under threat from impending construction in Antioch, CA. She has been instrumental in the founding and development of the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network and from 2003 to 2007 served on the Board of the nonprofit conservation group ECHO Fund, Inc. She has a degree in Social Sciences and is a member of the Wildlife Society.



Burrowing Owl Conservation Network's Advisory Board

- Pamela Flick - Defenders of Wildlife
- Lynne Trulio, Ph.D. - San Jose State University
- Bob & Samantha Fox - Wild At Heart
- Greg Clark - Wild At Heart & the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative

Photos from the field





Events

September 11, 2010 (10-3pm)

BOCN presenting and hosting a table display focused on conservation at the public/citizen level at the Burrowing Owl Consortium meeting. Meeting sponsored by Birding Sonoma Valley and held at the Viansa Winery and Wetlands in Sonoma, CA.

September 17, 2010 (2pm)

Scott Artis - Guest Speaker, Center for Science Excellence. Scott will be presenting information on burrowing owls and discussing the role of science and non-science professionals in fisheries and wildlife conservation. (Contra Costa College, 2600 Mission Bell Drive, San Pablo, CA. 94806 - Planetarium/Auditorium)

For more details and a list of the most current events visit our website: BurrowingOwlConservation.org



JUST THE FACTS - Legal Status

The burrowing owl is federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Burrowing Owls are listed as Endangered in Canada and Threatened in Mexico. They are considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to be a Bird of Conservation Concern at the national level, in three USFWS regions, and in nine Bird Conservation Regions. At the state level, Burrowing Owls are listed as Endangered in Minnesota, Threatened in Colorado, and as a Species of Concern in California, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Getting Involved Report a sighting

Have you seen a burrowing owl or two or more?

If so, then the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network is looking forward to hearing from you. The information you provide not only aids in our conservation, research and tracking efforts, but it offers burrowing owls a chance for survival in an ever dynamic world full of urbanization. Additionally, it allows us to direct conservation activities to areas or communities that require assistance.

Send your observations to: sightings@burrowing-owl.org

Learning More Online...

Learn about our conservation projects, research, advocacy efforts and community outreach at <http://BurrowingOwlConservation.org>

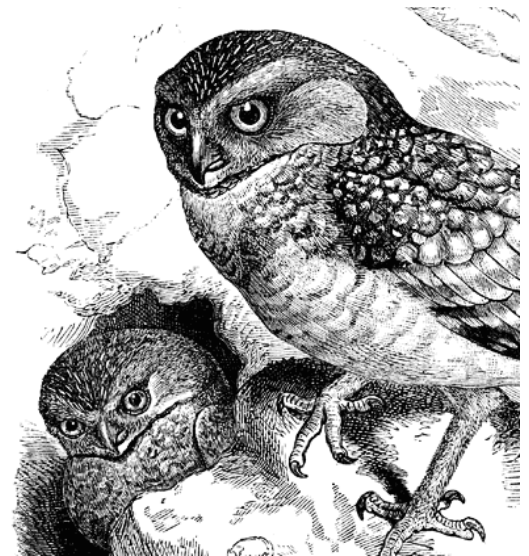
Like Blogs? Then check out what our staff is saying and what we're up to at:

The Birder's Report by Larry Jordan - Find everything you wanted to know about birding and bird conservation along with excellent photography.

<http://thebirdersreport.com>

JournOwl by Scott Artis - Wildlife news, research, information and commentary designed to promote conservation, link ecologically-minded individuals and spur discussion and change.

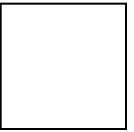
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GET THE WORD OUT

Tell your friends about the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network and join our conservation efforts TODAY!

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network is a fiscally sponsored project of Earth Island Institute, a 501(c)3 non-profit, public interest, membership organization.



Burrowing Owl Conservation Network
P.O. Box 128
Brentwood, CA 94513

