



APRIL - JUNE
2011

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Photo: Scott Artis

23 California Organizations Sign-On to Burrowing Owl Conservation Letter

On April 6, 2011 the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network (BOCN) delivered a letter to Governor Jerry Brown, California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird and Director of the Department of Fish and Game John McCamman urging for the immediate development and release for public comment a Burrowing Owl Comprehensive Conservation Strategy that will facilitate the maintenance of viable burrowing owl populations in California, help prevent the further elimination of breeding pairs and population declines across the state, and form a solid foundation by which regional and statewide population recovery and habitat protections can be achieved.

BOCN's letter was a joint effort with Defenders of Wildlife and

was signed by 22 other California organizations representing more than 209,000 Californians who have a vested interest in the conservation of the Western burrowing owl.

Because development and urbanization are drastically reducing suitable habitats used for nesting, roosting and foraging, and the control of fossorial mammals (e.g. ground squirrels) are eliminating burrows for which this species relies upon year-round for all aspects of their survival, California's population has witnessed drastic declines over the last thirty years. In 2009 surveys found the Imperial Valley burrowing owl population had declined by more than 36% and a report published in 2010 found pairs in the San Francisco Bay Area Interior region declined by nearly 28%.

Research Projects from Oregon to California

Besides conservation, advocacy and education programs, BOCN will be working on a number of research projects to increase the burrowing owl knowledgebase and aid in North American conservation efforts.

With upcoming projects that span Oregon and California, our staff will partner with biologists from nonprofit organizations and state and federal agencies.

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.



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Conversations

*Of all the birds I've photographed over the years, burrowing owls, with their hypnotic gazes and curious dispositions are the most interesting species I've worked with. Their stature and poise is nothing short of intoxicating and one can't help but to commiserate with them in their struggle to find some sort of secured permanence in our sprawling world. With camera in hand lying on my stomach, eye-to-eye with them, I don't just see another bird; I see something eerily more profound and almost humanistic. I see something worth protecting. **Mac Stone***

Conservation Letter (cont.)

BOCN would like to thank the following organizations for their support in our efforts to protect burrowing owls:

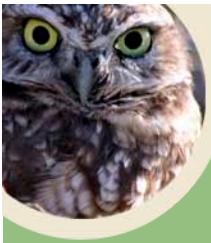
Defenders of Wildlife
Wintu Audubon Society
Redwood Region Audubon Society
Peregrine Audubon Society
Burrowing Owl Preservation Society
Burroworks Inc.
Worth A Dam
Central Sierra Audubon Society
San Joaquin Audubon Society
Sequoia ForestKeeper
Fresno Audubon Society
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club
Sequoia Audubon Society
Pomona Valley Audubon
La Purisima Audubon Society
Delta Group of the Sierra Club
Friends of Sausal Creek
Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
Plumas Audubon Society
Mendocino Coast Audubon
Friends of Hammond Pond
Environmental Priorities Network

Mac Stone is an internationally published photographer and is currently working in the Florida Keys with the National Audubon Society to further Everglades Restoration efforts.
www.MacStonePhoto.com



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Education Outreach Manager Joins Team!

It goes without saying that we are getting very busy and our programs and outreach are expanding exponentially. In an effort to help us reach the next generation more efficiently, BOCN is excited to announce the latest member to join our all volunteer Team. Karen, our Education Outreach Manager, is already working on in depth classroom programs designed to get students, teachers, and schools involved in burrowing owl conservation. We are expecting to launch these programs soon! Here are a few words from Karen:

Dear BOCN Supporters,

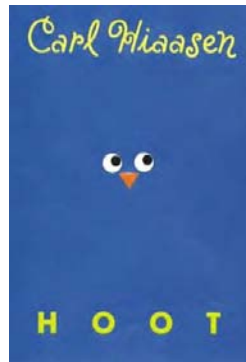
My love of nature and wildlife has always been a part of me. My real involvement began in Tennessee with a wildlife rescue organization in Chattanooga. After moving to the West Coast, I continued such work in the East Bay and later in Sonoma County where we lived for seven years. More recently, I have augmented my nature conservation work by combining it with a newfound hobby, nature photography.

We moved to Brentwood one year ago and came to know and love burrowing owls. I then decided to use my skills to help educate children about these "little birds with big attitudes." I hope to show that anyone, no matter their background or who they are, can make a difference by translating their love of animals into action.

Sincerely,

Karen Lively, RN

"Hoot" inspires class to raise funds for burrowing owl conservation



We love the support! When a letter from Maryland reached our office, we assumed we would be adding names to our growing list of people signing our petition for the development of a statewide conservation strategy. **However, we were pleasantly surprised to find a letter from an elementary school**

student and a check for \$111.48. We hope everyone is just as excited to read this letter as we were, and perhaps his enthusiasm will be your motivation for burrowing owl conservation or any cause that touches your heart. And just between us, his letter has resulted in the development of a new educational program that we will be launching with the help of our new Education Outreach Manager.

Thanks Joshua and the Bowie Montessori Children's House for supporting our conservation efforts!

To Whom It Concerns:

I read about your organization and hope it is very successful this year, because we love these owls! I decided to write a report about burrowing owls, because I read and loved the book "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen. To do the report I used the internet and looked up information about burrowing owls, and read about how they are in need of conservation. I found out about your organization and thought it was great! So I decided to see if I could raise some money by telling my class (Bowie Montessori Children's House) about the owls, and asking for donations to help your organization. The enclosed check is the money I received for the owls. Thank you so much for your work to save burrowing owls!

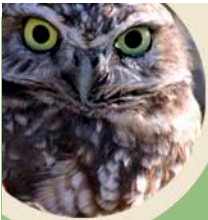
Respectfully,

Joshua



Visit us online to see our new PSA
"Take Time for Burrowing Owls"





Benefits of Joining!

Besides the benefits of supporting our hands-on conservation efforts, advocacy, outreach and research activities, we have a few gifts that we are happy to offer with your tax-deductible donation.

Receive a free one-year subscription to the award winning Earth Island Journal with your \$40 or more donation.



Or with your \$100 or more contribution you can choose a Burrowing Owl Conservation Network T-Shirt.



EARTH DAY EVENT! BOCN Implements Plan to Restore Habitat for Breeding Owls in Sonoma County

On April 17th the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network joined forces with Defenders of Wildlife, Sonoma Birding and volunteers to initiate a plan to restore much needed breeding habitat for burrowing owls in Sonoma County. With a grant from the Redwood Region Ornithological Society, BOCN purchased the raw materials and constructed artificial burrows on a privately owned ranch in Southern Sonoma.

Although burrowing owls use Sonoma as wintering grounds, the last reported successful breeding pair was recorded in 1986 on Skaggs Island. The location of this restoration project provides an ideal area by which burrows can be established along an open space corridor that will involve the assistance of local wineries and land owners for the benefit of these native California raptors.

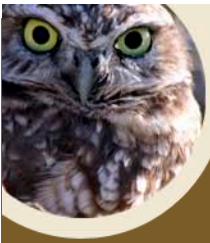
According to Scott Artis, *"The support and cooperation of land owners is*

essential for the restoration of burrowing owls in Sonoma and other counties throughout the state. The support and enthusiasm we received for this first of many Sonoma projects will undoubtedly serve as a model for other individuals, land owners and wineries looking to make a difference for declining burrowing owl populations."

In November 2010, Scott found evidence in the form of whitewash and feathers of burrowing owls who were exploring the ranch for available burrows.

Unfortunately, the lack of natural burrows and ground excavating mammals meant the owl(s) had little choice but to move along in search of suitable habitat. *"Now that artificial burrows have been installed,"* Scott said, *"we will be ready for owls that migrate through Sonoma during the winter. Because California is considered the most important state for migrating burrowing owls during the wintertime, protecting and restoring habitat can aid dwindling populations in Oregon, Washington and Canada."*





Burrowing owls were first listed as a Species of Special Concern in California in 1978 and have remained on the list ever since.

Just the facts!

BOCN Connects with Students in Contra Costa and Yolo Counties

Between the storms that filtered in and out of the month of March, we managed to take advantage of the breaks in rain to connect with students in Antioch and Winters for a little burrowing owl education and artificial burrow installation.

On March 11th Scott and Karen hosted a burrowing owl field trip at the Prewett Park Burrowing Owl Habitat Preserve in Antioch for the local home school association. Besides educating parents and students on wildlife and habitat, the group numbering just over 20 had an opportunity to learn how to distinguish owl burrows from squirrel burrows, aid in recording the GPS location of occupied burrows, and observe 3 burrowing owls interacting with their environment.

A mere 11 days later, Scott joined the Center for Land-Based Learning in Winters to discuss burrowing owl conservation efforts and aid in the installation of two artificial burrows with students from Davis Senior High School. According to the Center for Land-Based Learning, students "spent 4 days restoring habitat on 15 acres of private land west of Winters in Yolo County. This project is funded in part by Pacific Gas & Electric, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, NRCS, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program."



"The habitat being restored includes oak savanna, native grassland, forbs, riparian vegetation, and a native plant hedgerow around the perimeter of the site. The restoration will provide important habitat for many species found in the Sacramento Valley, including burrowing owls that will be given a new artificial nesting burrow with the help of students."



Thanks to Matt Lechmaier, SLEWS Program Coordinator, for the opportunity to connect with students on this excellent project.

The mission of the Center for Land-Based Learning is to inspire and motivate people of all ages, especially youth, to promote a healthy interplay between agriculture, nature, and society through their actions and as leaders in their communities.



Photos from the field

We love to get messages and owl photos from our supporters. Send us your pictures today!





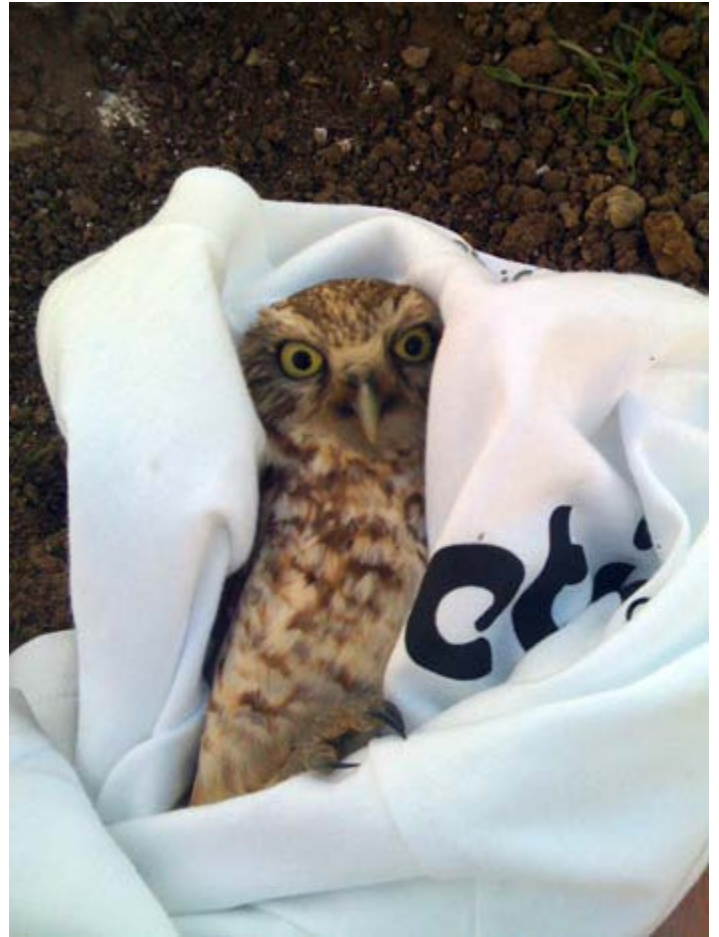
Burrowing owl goes astray- rescued from Brentwood store by Scott Artis

It's not all that uncommon and I'm sure at some point in our daily travels we have all come across the occasional wayward soul who insists on loitering inside a local store. And more often than not they just so happen to plant themselves just out of reach. Logic dictates that the open door from which they entered would ultimately provide a means of escape, but that is not always the case. But when we are talking about our feathered friends and the power of flight it's not always that simple.

In cases governed by the Law of Averages, I guess it was just a matter of time before Bernoulli's statistical principle dictated which feathered creature would actually mingle with wandering patrons under artificial lighting. Sparrows and pigeons are fairly safe bets, but I wasn't quite ready to hear that the culprit was a burrowing owl.

As I was putting the final touches on presentation for the Redwood Region Ornithological Society, I received an email from Lindsay Wildlife Museum alerting me that a burrowing owl was reportedly trapped in a store of a nearby outdoor mall. Unfortunately, the commotion caused the owl to retreat to a secluded spot in the rafters, 18 feet off the ground.

15 minutes later I was walking through the open doors of Mainland Skate and Surf (Streets of Brentwood). And not only was the ceiling 18 feet high, but a burrowing owl was perched on the ventilation ductwork at the furthest possible point from the enticing open doors. After a period of 5 minutes discussing options with staff management, we were able to coax the little owl to fly...which for both our sakes resulted in a landing between some hanging backpacks. As I sprinted across the store I could see him jostling with the canvas until he came to rest on the ground. Without hesitation I grabbed a folded shirt from a perfectly aligned stack and covered the nervous owl.



The rescue provided a wonderful opportunity to introduce burrowing owls to a few shoppers and show a little girl her first live owl. The burrowing owl was returned to his field and readily took to a nearby burrow for what I'm sure was some much needed peace and quiet.

However, I think it is important to recognize the actions of Briana Simmons and Britney Tennison, Mainland staff managers, who took it upon themselves to ensure the safety of the owl and initiate calls to the proper organizations. Their quick actions resulted in a flurry of phone calls that prevented the owl from an inside overnight stay and potential harm. It is always great to have the support of conservation-minded individuals!



Events

April 16, 2011 (10am to 4pm)

John Muir Birthday-Earth Day Celebration

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network exhibit booth at the John Muir Birthday–Earth Day Celebration in Martinez, California. John Muir inspired people all over the world to “keep close to nature’s heart.” So celebrate Earth Day and John Muir’s birthday at this free premier event at the John Muir National Historic Site.

May 10, 2011 (7pm)

Meeting - Wintu Audubon Society

Larry Jordan - Larry will be presenting information on burrowing owls and discussing conservation in California at the Wintu Audubon Society at the Turtle Bay Museum in Redding, CA.

May 16, 2011 (7:30pm)

Meeting - Madrone Audubon Society

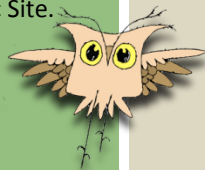
Scott Artis - Guest Speaker, Madrone Audubon Society (Sonoma County). Scott will be presenting information on burrowing owls and discussing conservation in the Bay Area, California and beyond.

May 19, 2011 (6:30pm)

Meeting – Plumas Audubon Society

Larry Jordan - Guest Speaker, Plumas Audubon Society. Larry will be presenting information on burrowing owls and discussing conservation in California at the Quincy Library in Quincy, CA.

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



LEARN MORE & CONNECT WITH US ONLINE

- Learn about our conservation projects, research, advocacy efforts and community outreach at <http://BurrowingOwlConservation.org>
- Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
- Join “Save Burrowing Owls” at Causes.com
- Keep up with the latest information and check out our blogs
 - <http://journowl.com>
 - <http://thebirdersreport.com>

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

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network's Volunteer Staff

Scott Artis – Founding Director

Larry Jordan – Habitat Manager

Dee Vieira – East County Program Manager

Heather Artis – Conservation Manager

Karen Lively - Education Outreach Manager

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



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 project of Earth Island Institute, a 501(c)3 non-profit, public interest, membership organization.