

THE BURROW GUARDIAN

APRIL—JUNE
2012

THIS ISSUE

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- ▶ Wild At Heart Honored
- ▶ Owls in Butte County
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- ▶ Owls find new homes in Placer & Sonoma
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BOCN Launches monthly e-newsletter

Burrow Bites

Bite-Sized Bits of Owl Wisdom
Delivered free to your email- sign up online

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.

Burrowing Owls Thrive in Brentwood Neighborhood— Just a temporary haven?

It seems like any other burgeoning neighborhood. There are houses, streets, lights, families walking with their children on an evening stroll, and even those being led by their canine companions. It really is Anytown, USA. And just like oh so many other neighborhoods that began to leave their marks over the last 6-7 years, this one remains unfinished with graded lots waiting for the economic tide to return.

Although seemingly bare, it's a highly occupied suburban ecosystem that has managed to flourish despite the surrounding sound

walls and hardscapes. On the surface this appears quite paradoxical, but that's exactly where one needs to look, on, and below, the surface. However, we're not the only ones who know this incredible secret. With more than 30 Burrowing Owls watching the world go by from their sidewalk perch, folks in Brentwood, CA have indeed been witnessing a burrowing owl bonanza – and I must say they are impossible to miss.

Over the last 7 months or so we have been paying extra attention to this site. Not because we are just enjoying the (cont. on page 5)



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Burrowing Owl Conservation Network is a 501(c)3 non-profit, public interest, organization.



Wild At Heart honored for work with Arizona raptors

On November 5th 2011, Wild At Heart received the 34th annual John Muir Conservation Award for "Outstanding achievement by a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental protection, or demonstrated significant achievement or leadership in the advancement of environmental protection or conservation".



Wild At Heart was honored for their Burrowing Owl and Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl conservation, habitat, and captive breeding work as well as Wild At Heart's raptor rescue and rehabilitation efforts.

A very belated CONGRATULATIONS!

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network highly regards the innovative work developed and performed by Wild At Heart, and nominating Bob and Samantha Fox's organization for this prestigious award was indeed a pleasure. You are an inspiration to us all!

Cheers,

Scott Artis

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network

Happy Earth Day

April 22, 2012

In Spring 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson created Earth Day as a way to force a national agenda on pollution. 20 million Americans demonstrated in different U.S. cities, and it worked!

In December 1970, Congress authorized the creation of a new federal agency to tackle environmental issues, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Source: EPA



DFG Releases New Guidelines

On March 7, 2012 the California Department of Fish & Game updated their antiquated 1995 document with the release of a revised Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation.

BOCN has been actively petitioning the state to develop and release for public comment a Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. We will be addressing these new guidelines in the next issue of "The Burrow Guardian."

NEW MEMBERSHIP PACKAGES—keeping people engaged



April is full of changes at BOCN...and that means upgraded membership packages. It's our way of saying THANKS for your continued support.

So visit BurrowingOwlConservation.org, choose a level that works for you and JOIN TODAY!



Burrowing Owls in Butte County

By Larry Jordan

Let's take a look back at August 9, 2011...

Last month I took a trip down to Wildhorse Golf Club in Davis, California, to see how this year's crop of Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*) were doing. I didn't have nearly enough time to do a proper survey of the golf course to see how many owls were there but last fall I counted over twenty at this artificial/natural cavity breeding site. This is a couple of owls at one of the many natural cavities in and around this golf course.

In California, most of these natural burrows taken over by Burrowing Owls are excavated by the California Ground Squirrel.

The Burrowing Owl needs fossorial (digging or burrowing) mammals to excavate its burrows in most parts of the country and the continued extermination of the California Ground Squirrel in this state is one of the reasons for the decline in Burrowing Owl populations.

In other parts of the country, the burrows are dug by badgers, foxes and prairie dogs and the owls are thought to dig their own burrows in Florida.

Two other major reasons for this owl's decline are intensive agricultural practices and urban sprawl.



Fortunately, we had a successful breeding pair produce eight young this season near Chico in Butte County.

It was fun watching these youngsters flying from one perch to another, usually a rock or ledge, as they practiced their aerial maneuvers with their siblings.

This family is probably ready to leave for their

wintering grounds soon. They have been coming to this location for several years for breeding season but we have no idea where they go during the winter months.

These were the best photographs I could get of this Burrowing Owl family with the digiscope from the road. They nest on private property, like most breeding pairs, and we have not yet gotten permission to do closer study of this group.



Unfortunately, the owls seen on the artificial site in Chico earlier in the year have not been seen since May. I was really hoping that we had a breeding pair using that site but I don't know what happened to them. We had seen three owls there at one point in the spring, then nothing. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for next season.

The owls in Davis on the other hand, are permanent residents and can be seen at Wildhorse Golf Club any time of the year. If you are travelling near Sacramento, California, I urge you to stop in Davis and give them a look. You won't be disappointed. They are very approachable.

(To view all the photos visit TheBirdersReport.com)





BIG CHANGES, NEW STRATEGIES & REACHING OUT

More hours, expanded territory, better support

You spoke and we listened! Burrowing Owls across California and the western states are keeping us so busy we can't keep up. Although projects, education events, outreach, advocacy, and site visits and monitoring will benefit from newly realized strategies, we are happy to announce that Heather Artis is increasing her role with the organization. Through additional volunteer hours, Heather will greatly expand staff office time availability - hours that will be dedicated to fielding the many daily phone calls, answering emails, updating our social media outlets and logging all the great sighting reports we receive. Additionally, the golden state will espe-

cially benefit from our expansion into central California. With our continued presence in the San Francisco Bay Area, a field office in Shasta County, and an office in Tulare County, we are strategically positioned to tackle more conservation and education projects and boost our advocacy efforts across the state.

Reports released in 2010 revealed a 27-percent drop in the number of breeding burrowing owls in the Imperial Valley, and a 28-percent drop in the San Francisco Bay Area. These declines ride on the heels of a more than 50-percent burrowing owl population decline in the San Francisco Bay Area and parts of Central California between 1983 and 1993. Considering these incredible population declines span Northern and Southern Cali-

fornia, we look forward to the role these new strategies will make in Burrowing Owl conservation and collaborations in the United States.

Upgrading our technological resources

We've upgraded our email system! I'm sure a few notes were left behind in the shuffle, but we are up and running and catching up. Through a partnership with Google we have not only improved our email system, but we

are actively building our new YouTube channel complete with premium branding options. And that's not all.

Thanks to free online advertising provided by Google, we are reaching many more people and spreading the word. Visitors to our website are already up 300%!



Keeping supporters up to date

April marks the inaugural edition of our monthly e-newsletter Burrow Bites, delivering "Bites-Sized Bits of Owl Wisdom" right to your email. We are committed to keeping our followers and supporters current on our projects, work and efforts. Thus, to better serve you and Burrowing Owls, it was critical that we implement this new communications strategy that will now complement our quarterly print/electronic newsletter "The Burrow Guardian."



Neighborhood's Booming Burrowing Owls (continued from page 1)

company of owls (we do of course), but activity has been building akin to the rumblings of a volcano before an eruption. This area first appeared on our radar in 2009 and has jumped from single digits to a colony of more than 30 individuals. We discussed on numerous occasions proper care and management of the area with bank-hired workers clearing dirt from sidewalks and operating small tractors on this fore-closed property. **We changed attitudes, corrected protocols and uncovered burrows inadvertently buried.** Things went quiet.



met with the developer's project manager on site and we followed up with the City of Brentwood's Planning Manager. We had a great discussion and the time has come to approach the city during Planning and City Council meetings so we can work together for the protection of Burrowing Owls in Brentwood.

As of now, development activities are currently on hold, breeding season 2012 is underway, and we successfully banded together for the benefit of a small owl that lives underground. These little wins are important and we are very much looking for-

Within a couple months the ground was again rumbling and our phone was ringing off the hook from concerned neighbors who awoke to find "their" underground owls in danger. Squirrels were being poisoned, burrows were being covered and black tarp was being stretched just above the sidewalks as a Burrowing Owl deterrent. Phone calls continued to ring out across the East Bay as organizations and agencies were alerted to the activities. Construction was imminent!

But eyes, ears, binoculars, cameras, the community and BOCN were on the scene to monitor activities and ensure adherence to state and federal laws. BOCN's East County Program Manager

ward to the many chicks that will eventually emerge from their burrows this year. An undisturbed breeding season can only help a species with a dwindling population.

We are not fortune tellers, but this owl paradise is certainly coming to an end. And it is our priority to ensure the continued safety of these resident owls. We certainly cannot be everywhere at once so your observations are essential in the months to come to ensure their conservation.

If we want to continue seeing Burrowing Owls in Brentwood, Contra Costa County and the Bay Area, we must work together for sustainable and responsible development.

SHORT & SWEET A MEANINGFUL TESTIMONIAL

“ *This group doesn't just talk conservation, they get out and DO stuff to protect wildlife and habitat. Give them a hand.* ”

Ellis Myers
Mount Diablo Audubon Society

BLUE IS THE NEW GREEN IT'S THE COLOR OF CONSERVATION



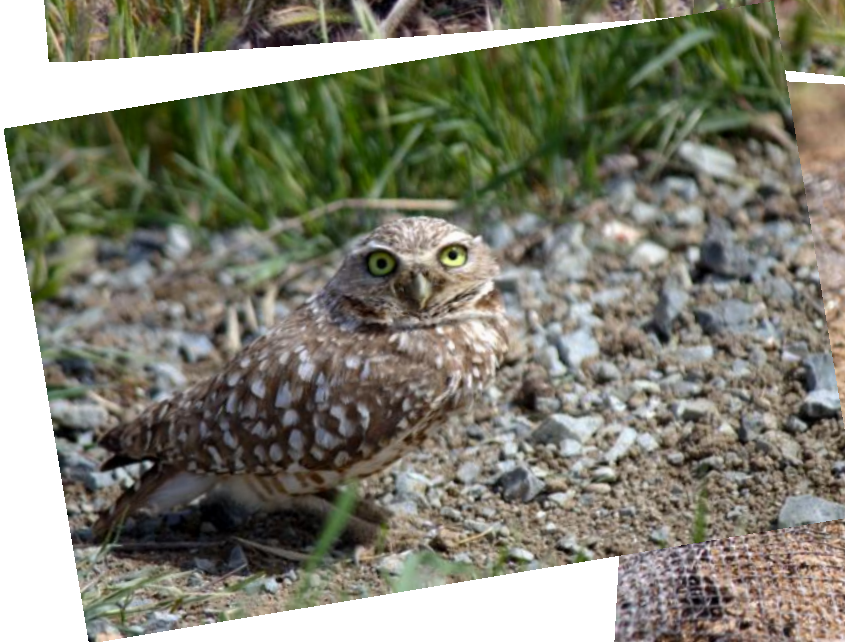
The wait is over! The highly anticipated BOCN T-Shirts are back and ready to ship...and they're BLUE.

Don't hesitate, order now and wear your support for conservation



Photos from the field

Send us your owl photos! We love to hear your stories and get pictures from our supporters and owl lovers.





HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PAYS OFF- Owls Find New Homes

It's time for an update!

Remember...

On June 8th and 15th, three organizations, Burrowing Owl Conservation Network, Placer Land Trust and Defenders of Wildlife, put boots on the ground at Swainsons Grassland Preserve and Doty Ravine Preserve to enhance and extend Burrowing Owl habitat in Placer County. Over the course of two days, volunteers successfully installed 16 artificial burrows and made a valuable contribution to Burrowing Owl conservation efforts in Northern California.



Dennis Cavallo: Placer Land Trust owl at artificial burrow

On July 14th Burrowing Owl Conservation Network partnered with Sonoma Land Trust and Sonoma Birding to expand Burrowing Owl habitat in southern Sonoma County, which gave kids an opportunity to get involved in species-specific conservation efforts. The daylong event began with an onsite, interactive discussion on Burrowing Owls led by BOCN's Scott Artis and culminated with the installation of two artificial burrows on land owned and managed by Sonoma Land Trust.

We love it when plans come together!

And we are even more thrilled when volunteers have an opportunity to see the fruits of their labor. During our October

22, 2011 event to expand habitat in Sonoma, CA (a partnership between Sonoma Land Trust and Sonoma Birding), volunteers were given a firsthand glimpse into the life of Burrowing Owls, who could now be seen enjoying the safety of homes installed in mid-July.

It was a perfect opportunity for people donating their weekend to Burrowing Owls to actually see conservation in action, and it reiterated the need for suitable habitat to aid this declining species.

But the good burrow news doesn't end here. In November 2011 we received photos from our friends and colleagues at Placer Land Trust as Burrowing Owls were observed using their new burrows at Swainsons Grassland Preserve.

Thanks to our volunteers and to our fellow partners working to restore Burrowing Owl habitat in California.

And now that we're caught up with a few official updates, we look forward to sharing more news in our monthly e-newsletter and the next edition of "The Burrow Guardian."



DID YOU KNOW?

We want to acknowledge the Streets of Brentwood shopping center for working with BOCN staff and stepping up for owl safety.

The paired resident owls are ready for another successful breeding season. Go 2012!



Put a Spotlight on Conservation



Donate Today!



LEARN MORE & CONNECT WITH US ONLINE

Learn about our conservation projects, research, advocacy efforts and community outreach

BurrowingOwlConservation.org

Keep up with the latest information and check out our blogs:

<http://journowl.com>

<http://thebirdersreport.com>



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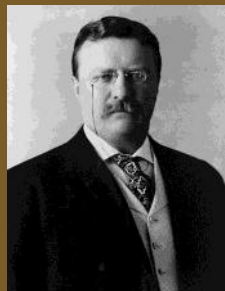
[YouTube.com/journowl](https://www.youtube.com/journowl)



causes.com/causes/529014

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

Conversations



"They have a funny habit of gravely bowing or posturing at the passer-by, and stand up very erect on their legs."

"Around the prairie-dog towns it is always well to keep a look-out for the smaller carnivora, especially coyotes and badgers...and for the larger kinds of hawks. Rattlesnakes are quite plenty, living in the deserted holes, and the latter are also the homes of the little burrowing owls."

Theodore Roosevelt on burrowing owls

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

GET THE WORD OUT

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



Burrowing Owl Conservation Network's Staff

Scott Artis – Executive Director

Larry Jordan – Habitat Manager

Dee Vieira – East County Program Manager

Heather Artis – Conservation 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