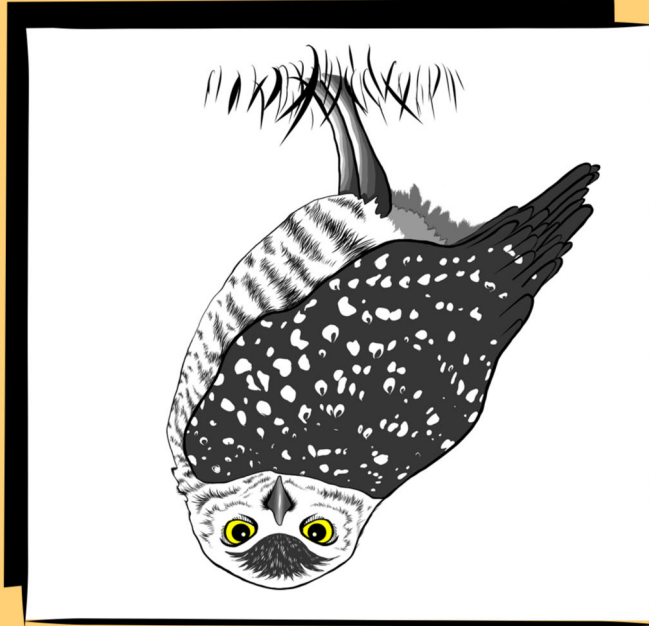


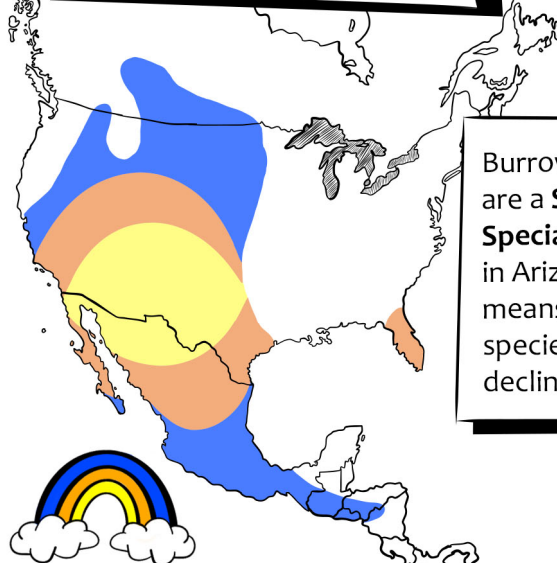
Production by Daniela Napolitano
Text by Bella Goudie
Illustrations by Bella Goudie



The Burrowing Owl (Athene cucularia)

Migration Range

Not all owls in Arizona are local!



Burrowing owls are a **Species of Special Concern** in Arizona. This means they are a species in rapid decline.

Burrowing owls participate in what ornithologists call "rainbow migration." In this form of migration, some owls come from the prairie in Canada and migrate almost 3000 miles to Mexico, while others fly 1200 miles from Montana to Arizona. The further north the owls come from, the farther south they fly in winter!

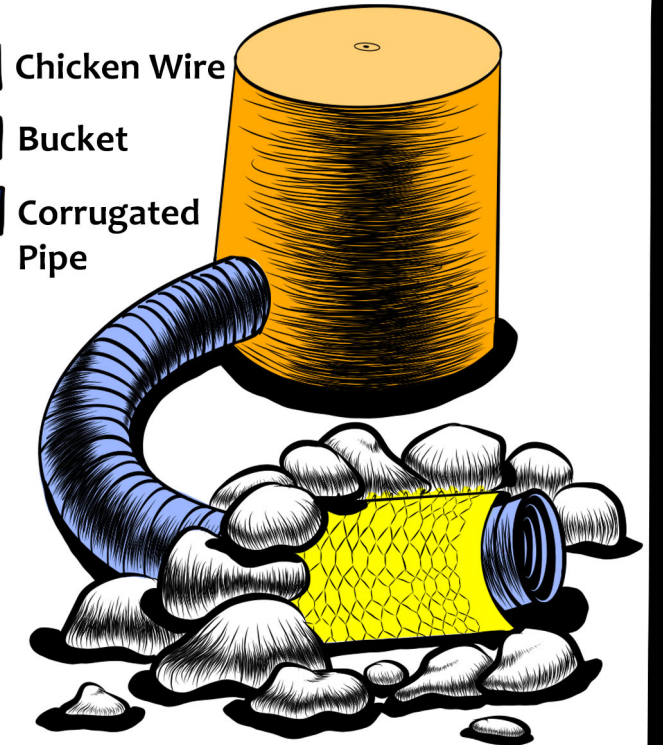
Wild at Heart

WaH is an Arizona-based raptor rescue organization. They rescue, rehabilitate, and release owls, hawks, falcons, and eagles. One of their projects is to save the burrowing owl through translocation.



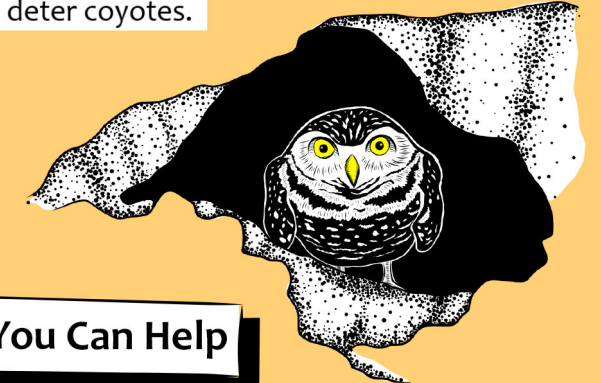
WaH runs translocation programs to rehome burrowing owls. If a concerned citizen or a developer contacts WaH, they will capture the owl, build an artificial burrow at a more suitable location, and rehome the owl. This process takes at least 30 days, and the owls need to be fed and watered every day. Most of this work is facilitated through the generous help of volunteers and donations.

- Chicken Wire
- Bucket
- Corrugated Pipe



Artificial Burrows

Artificial burrows are built with buckets, chicken wire, and corrugated pipe. The bucket is buried 4 feet underground with the pipe gently sloping to the surface. The entrance is wrapped in chicken wire and covered with rocks to deter badgers, coyotes, and dogs from damaging the burrow. Cayenne pepper also helps to deter coyotes.



How You Can Help

Call Greg and volunteer! You can help build a burrow, feed and monitor owls during translocation, or help identify new sites for translocation. This is the best way to see these charismatic little owls.

Phone: 480-688-0118

Email: greg@BTLLCAZ.Com

Warning: Burrowing Owl



In some Indigenous cultures, owls are a symbol associated with death or bad omens. For members of these Indigenous cultures, coming into unexpected contact with owls or owl symbols can be stressful and upsetting.

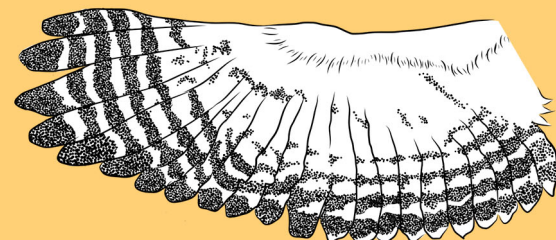
Why are the owl's eyes covered?

The eyes are covered to acknowledge this cultural tension and to mitigate potential stress for Indigenous audiences. This pamphlet can be stored backwards to further support Indigenous audiences.

Wing bands & Identification



Adult Female Wing



Adult Male Wing

It is difficult to determine the biological sex of a burrowing owl by looking at them. DNA testing is the most definitive way to know a bird's sex, but the inside of their wings can offer clues. Females tend to have 6 to 8 dark bars on the inside of their wings. Males have a maximum of 6 bars, and they are often more faded.

Greg Clark



Greg Clark is a raptor rescue hero. He has been WaH's Burrowing Owl Habitat Coordinator since 2001. He redesigns artificial burrows, identifies new sites for translocation, coordinates volunteers and much more! The burrowing owl program has been recognized by the 2011 John Muir Conservation Award and the 2014 Cox Conserves Hero Award.



Desert Humanities
ASU Institute for Humanities Research
Arizona State University

Diet

Burrowing owls eat insects and small mammals. They commonly prey on grasshoppers, moths, beetles, mice, voles, and shrews. The owls are great for maintaining pest populations in agricultural areas. The females mostly catch insects during the day. Meanwhile, males mostly catch mammals at night.



Fun fact: Burrowing owls will decorate the land around their burrows with coyote feces. They might do this to scare away predators, mark territory, or to attract insects.

What to do if you see an Owl

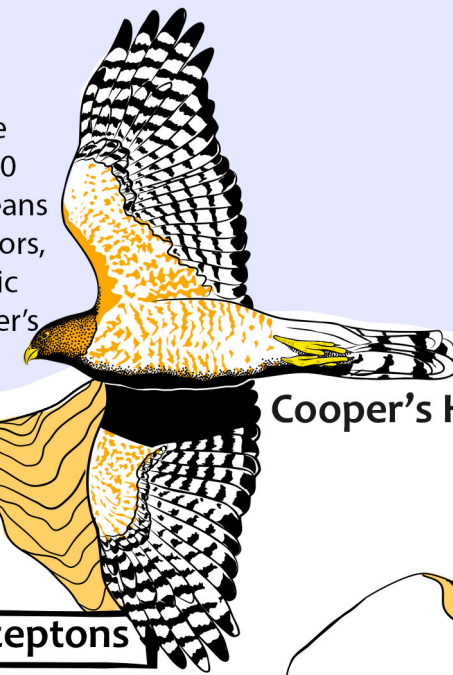
Burrowing owls are protected by the US Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Give the owls space. Look, but don't touch their burrow and keep your dogs leashed.

If you see an owl on a development site or in any type of danger, report it to Wild at Heart! Call 480-595-5047.

Fun fact: Arizona State University hosts burrowing owls on its Polytechnic Campus.

Predators

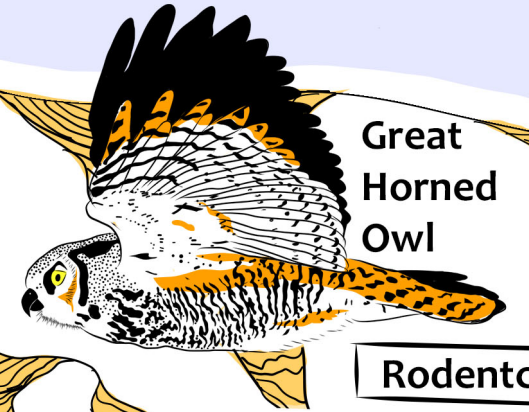
Burrowing owls are quite small, averaging about 10 inches in height. This means they have a lot of predators, such as coyotes, domestic dogs, rattlesnakes, cooper's hawks, and even great horned owls!



Cooper's Hawk

Other Threats

Burrowing owls face many threats besides predators. **Rodenticides and pesticides**, whether used by farms or homeowners, are a major threat to their well-being. Owls can become poisoned if they eat poisoned rodents or pests.



Great Horned Owl

Common Misconceptions

Sometimes visitors to trails worry that owl may hurt their pets. Don't worry! Burrowing owls are not dangerous but will hiss to try to keep invaders away.

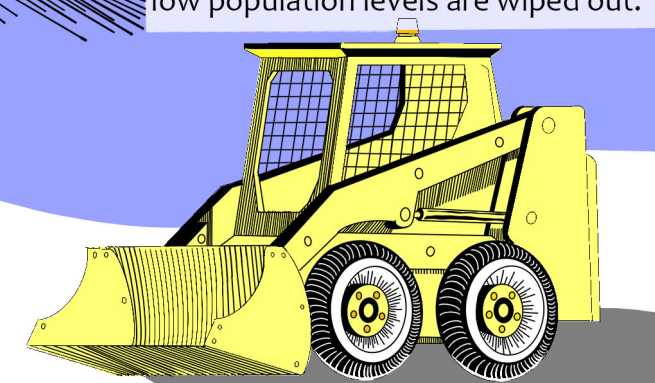
Rodenticides

Rodenticides are a problem not only because they kill burrowing owls, but because they often lead to a rise in pest populations. Over time, pests develop an immunity to pesticides, meanwhile the owls who maintained low population levels are wiped out.

Fossorial Mammals

Burrowing owls live in abandoned burrows dug by fossorial mammals, which are mammals that mainly live underground. This includes ground squirrels, prairie dogs and badgers. Once the mammal moves out, the owl moves in.

Fun Fact: Burrowing owls are the only known owl to live underground in burrows.

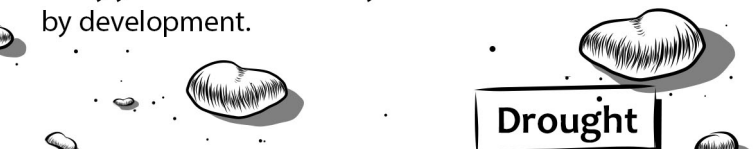


Development

Residential and commercial development has led to habitat loss for the burrowing owl. Whether it is wilderness or farmland, owls are running out of land to live on, including land for rehousing. This is a problem because the owls like to return to the same burrow every year. Sometimes they are buried in their burrows by development.

Habitat

Burrowing owls prefer burrows in wide-open, treeless areas with little vegetation. They need long sightlines to keep an eye on approaching predators. The owls can be found in grasslands, deserts, and steppe environments. This includes golf courses, pastures, agricultural fields, airport medians, road embankments, cemeteries, and vacant lots.

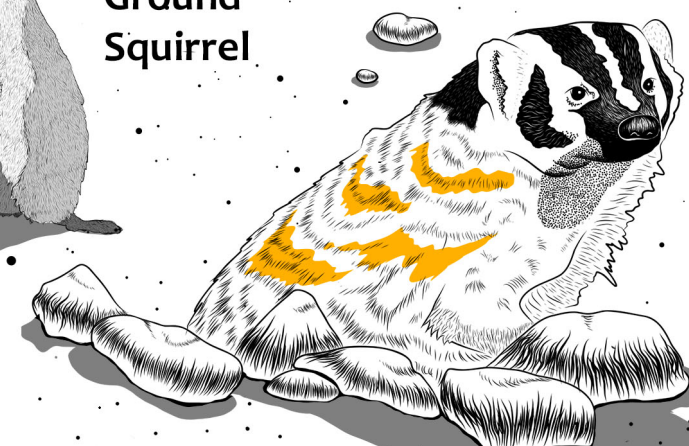


Drought

Drought conditions and the climate crisis also exacerbate issues for the burrowing owl. As water dries, up fossorial mammal populations decrease. This means there are fewer creatures to dig the burrows. Prey populations also decrease under drought, leaving less for the owls to eat.



Ground Squirrel



Badger