

Program Support

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

We welcome you to participate in the New Mexico Burrowing Owl Working Group. Volunteers can help by submitting Burrowing Owl observations (see form on reverse), attending meetings of the group, and promoting Burrowing Owl conservation in your community. Contact us at the address below and check out our website for current updates.



Photo by Octavio and Kirsten Cruz

If you observe an owl, please fill the form provided on the back of this page or online.

NEW MEXICO BURROWING OWL WORKING GROUP GOALS

- Document presence and general distribution of Burrowing Owls statewide.
- Establish a statewide volunteer monitoring effort to better document owls.
- Facilitate communication among researchers, agencies, and the public.
- Enter sightings into a protected database.
- Maintain a web page to provide information to the public and promote Burrowing Owl conservation.
- Develop conservation recommendations based on monitoring results.

Photo by Octavio and Kirsten Cruz



New Mexico Burrowing Owl Working Group
PO Box 66658
Albuquerque, NM 87193-6658

Environmental Services



Place Stamp Here



BURROWING OWL

People have long been fascinated with the Burrowing Owl, a ground dwelling inhabitant of western grasslands and deserts. The first published report was in 1782 by Giovanni Iganzio (Long, 1998). The Burrowing Owl has also been known as the Ground Owl, Prairie Dog Owl, Rattlesnake Owl, Howdy Owl, Cuckoo Owl, Tunnel Owl, Gopher Owl, and Hill Owl. Historically, the Zuni Indians called this owl “priest of the prairie dogs,” because it frequently nests and roosts in empty prairie dog burrows.

FACTS ABOUT BURROWING OWLS (*ATHENE CUNICULARIA*)

Physical Traits: They are covered in brown spotted feathers and have long legs. They have distinctive white “eyebrows” above bright yellow eyes. They are one of the smallest owls in North America. Females are generally darker than males overall, particularly in worn plumage.

grass, treeless plains, often associated with burrowing mammals.



Photo by Michael Forsberg

Mating Behavior: Courtship includes ritual feeding, calling, and displays.

Size: Has a body length of 7 ½ - 10 inches, a wingspan of 21 - 24 inches, and weighs 4 ½ - 9 ounces.

Nesting: Pairs use old mammal burrows (which they might enlarge) and often nest in small colonies. Females incubate 7-9 white eggs, which hatch in 30 days. Males feed the female and young in the burrow. The young emerge about two weeks after hatching. Families stay together until fall.

Breeding Range: Western North America. There is also a population in Florida.

Prey: Insects, rodents, reptiles, small birds, and bats.

Habitat: Dry, open, short

Status in New Mexico: Widespread. The Burrowing Owl is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act



Threats: Persecution and loss of prairie dog populations might limit the availability of nest burrows. Human development reduces available habitat for Burrowing Owls.



Who We Are



The New Mexico Burrowing Owl Working Group is a partnership of non-profit organizations, government agencies, private enterprises, and individuals with a common goal of promoting Burrowing Owl awareness and conservation in our state. Concerned over apparent

local population declines in New Mexico, the group was formed in 2001 as a means of sharing data and information among researchers, agencies, and the public. Your observations can improve our knowledge of general distribution and help us protect Burrowing Owls. Volunteer monitoring can also provide an indication of local population trends.

MISSION STATEMENT

- To increase awareness and communication among federal, state, tribal, and private organizations and reduce the risk of Burrowing Owl declines throughout the state through research and education.
- To provide a source by which historic and current status on the Burrowing Owl can be documented.
- To provide resources on the ecology, distribution, and management of Burrowing Owls on private and public lands.
- To involve citizens in monitoring owls, and their habitat, in order to increase the awareness of the Burrowing Owl.

OWLS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Burrowing Owls often nest in urban areas, and you might see them in your neighborhood. Perhaps in the arroyo behind your house, the abandoned lots near the office, or the park where you jog. As our communities grow and habitat patches are developed, some burrows will be destroyed. Your observations can help us ensure that adults or nestlings are not destroyed in the process. We work cooperatively with companies to establish protective buffers around active burrows or propose scheduling alternatives for activities in sensitive areas. As a last resort, we can work with regulatory agencies to rescue and relocate owls.



Photo by Octavio and Kirsten Cruz

OWL CONSERVATION

Intensified land use, primarily the conversion of grasslands for agricultural purposes and urban development, has resulted in widespread loss and fragmentation of nesting habitat. Eradication of prairie dog and ground squirrel, pesticide use and food availability are also



contributing factors to the population decline. Conservation efforts should identify and prioritize the most valuable habitats for conservation activity, promote the conservation of burrowing mammals, reduce the use of pesticides that affect the owl's food supply, establish cooperative research programs to determine why the owls are declining, familiarize private landowners with owl conservation issues and promote sustainable rangeland practices.

NEW MEXICO BURROWING OWL OBSERVATION FORM (Updated March 2010)

Submit original form to New Mexico Burrowing Owl Working Group, PO Box 66658 Albuquerque, NM 87193-6658 or online at www.nmburrowingowl.com. Retain a copy for your records.

Please complete only one form per season per calendar year. Observation Year _____ Season (check one below):
 EARLY WINTER 21 to 31 December LATE WINTER 1 January to 20 March SPRING 21 March to 20 June SUMMER 21 June to 21 September FALL 22 September to 20 December

Reporting Individual _____ Phone # _____ E-mail _____

Affiliation _____ Date Report Completed _____

Name(s) of Observer(s) _____

General Description of Where Owl(s) Observed (maps highly encouraged) _____

Nearest Municipality _____ County _____

Coordinates: E _____ N _____ UTM Datum _____ (NAD 83 preferred) Zone (circle one) 12 13

Explain if Conducting Formal Research (e.g., Breeding Bird Surveys) when Observed Owl(s): _____

Rate Certainty that Burrowing Owl(s) was/were Correctly Identified on a Scale from 0 ("Not at All Certain") to 10 ("Completely Certain"): _____ Briefly Describe How Identified Burrowing Owl(s): _____

Are additional notes, photographs, and/or maps attached (circle one)? Yes No

OBSERVATION

Dates of Observations (m/d/y)	Duration of Observation	Total Number of Owls	Total Number of Adult Pairs	Total Number of Adults	Total Number of Young Birds	Behavioral Observations (Check All that Apply)
First Date: ____/____/____ Last Date: ____/____/____	Number of Days: _____ Total Time: _____ Hours _____ Minutes	(check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated <input type="checkbox"/> Actual	(check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated <input type="checkbox"/> Actual	(check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated <input type="checkbox"/> Actual	(check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated <input type="checkbox"/> Actual	Chasing intruding owl or other animal <input type="checkbox"/> Copulating <input type="checkbox"/> Eating <input type="checkbox"/> Feeding young <input type="checkbox"/> Flying <input type="checkbox"/> Perched at or near burrow <input type="checkbox"/> Perched on fence, tree, shrub, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizing <input type="checkbox"/> Walking, hopping, or running <input type="checkbox"/>

SITE DESCRIPTION (Complete as Thoroughly as Possible)

Management authority if known (circle one): Federal Tribal State Municipal/County Private Unknown
 Name of management entity or owner if known (e.g., City of Albuquerque): _____
 What best describes the land use at or adjacent to where the owl(s) was/were observed (check one):
 Urban Suburban Semi-Rural Rural Agricultural Undisturbed/Wild Unknown
 Was/Were the owl(s) observed at a burrow (circle one)? Yes No If Yes, was the burrow (circle one): Natural Human-made
 If at a human-made burrow, please describe (e.g., culvert): _____
 If at a burrow, is the burrow in danger of being destroyed (circle one)? Yes No If Yes, explain: _____
 Were any of the following burrowing animals also present (circle one)? prairie dog ground squirrel badger other _____
 Were any owls banded (circle one)? Yes No Unknown If Yes, how many? _____
 If owls banded, please indicate any color sequences or numbers and whether bands were on the left and/or right legs, e.g., red band over black band on left leg, aluminum on right leg or 1005-41554 (left leg), 0 Red/5 Black (right leg): _____