



BURROWING OWL SURVEY MEETING APRIL 22, 2007

The second field season of the Institute for Bird Population's (IBP) state wide burrowing owl survey is May 15 to July 15. BOPS is hosting an informational meeting at the Davis branch of the Yolo County Library Blanchard room at 315 E 14th St on April 22 from 7 to 9 p.m. Refreshments will be served. A power point of the survey instructions will be shown and last year's surveyors will be on hand to chat with new recruits. Partnering is encouraged because it's easier and more fun surveying with another person.

The IBP will have the 5km x 5km topographical block maps ready for us to distribute. You may survey anytime from dawn to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to dusk. Data sheets are turned in whenever you feel you have adequately surveyed your block. Surveys must be completed by July 15.

continued on page 2

BUOW Survey Results: Yolo & Central Valley Regions

The Burrowing Owl Preservation Society and Ian Taylor from Yolo Audubon Society recruited and coordinated volunteers who visited **10 blocks throughout Yolo County** and one additional block in Sutter County. Surveyors contributed a total of 242 volunteer hours surveying for Burrowing Owls. Yolo County is a member of the Middle Central Valley Burrowing Owl Survey Region. The map below shows the extent of the 5 km by 5 km survey grid in the Middle Central Valley Region. Our results from the 1990's statewide survey estimated 595 breeding pairs in the Middle Central Valley. This accounts for 6% of the total estimated number of breeding pairs statewide during early 1990's survey. The current survey aims to provide information that will enable us to assess any changes in the breeding population of Burrowing Owls both in the Middle Central Valley and across the state. Our goal for the 2006 field season was to visit half of the blocks known to historically contain at least one breeding pair in the Middle Central Valley Region as well as half of the randomly selected blocks to be sampled over the two year survey period (the other half will



be visited in 2007). Survey goals in Yolo County were amply met. Surveyors visited a total of 11 blocks including 8 historically known breeding owl blocks and 3 random blocks. **Disappointingly, breeding pairs were detected at only four blocks**, all of which were owl blocks. cursory examination shows that of the four historic breeding blocks that no longer harbor owls two have been vacant since the 1980's, one block had owls present during the early 1990's survey, and one breeding pair was present on the remaining block as recently as this decade.

Among the four blocks where breeding pairs were observed in Yolo County a total of 12 pairs were detected. Good news to report is that a persisting breeding population was observed on one block that harbored owls in the 1980's. Two blocks were tied for the highest number of breeding pairs (four), one of which was the 1980's block. Of the two other owl blocks

continued on page 3

Education

Nature Bowl 2007

BOPS is happy to see another team of “winners” concerning themselves with burrowing owls at the March, 2007 Nature Bowl competition in Davis.

Robbie Ruport and his fellow teammates of Holy Rosary Elementary School in Woodland have been working tirelessly and enthusiastically since late fall in preparing for this event. Researching and writing papers on environmental science subjects, learning difficult science vocabulary, training to recognize and interpret wild animal scat and prints, and much more, was only part of the effort.



This year, students for the first time were not allowed to use props or bulletin boards while giving their individual or team infomercial. Despite this setback, Robbie provided an outstanding burrowing owl infomercial in one minute. Overall, he and his teammates did a super job when it came to meeting the various challenges of the competition.

Even though they did not win the third grade team regional competition, they had lots of fun and it was a great learning experience, preparing them to be winners next year when they are fourth graders. Congratulations team members and coaches!

Definition of a Hero

When students are given the chance to be involved and to have a chance to reflect, they bring out the best in all of us, making a difference for our world. Enjoy this abbreviated essay that sixth grade student Charles Plank of Tafoya Elementary School in Woodland wrote.

A hero is someone who doesn't give up for what is right. A hero has to have goals and go for them. They have to not be afraid to stand up to what is right and if he or she loses still must go for their goal. That is what I think is a hero.....

In a movie HOOT there is a boy named Roy. Roy is trying to save something; it is not a person, it's an owl. Roy and his friends tried to save some burrowing owls from a building company. Roy doesn't like them destroying the owls and stops them from building there. Roy saved the owls and was a hero.

I think BOPS is a real life hero. I think they are heros because they help little burrowing owls. The people at BOPS put a lot of time in to help the owls not for money. One person from BOPS came to our school and taught us about burrowing owls. That is my real life hero.

Each person I wrote about stood up for what is right. I have learned a lot from all of them. They are all heros in different ways. They all did not quit. To me they are all heros.

SURVEY *continued from page 1*

This is an historic event! It was 1990 when the last survey was completed. This census is cited in most burrowing owl literature. It is important information for conservation planners and researchers.

You can be part of it! BOPS is focused on Yolo County, but there is a need for surveyors in Colusa and Sutter Counties. If you know a potential surveyor in that area please put them in touch with IBP at bwilkerson@birdpop.org or visit www.birdpop.org/burrowing2007.htm

This meeting is NOT a requirement to survey. You may obtain a Yolo or any other county IBP survey block assignment with written instructions from Catherine at (530) 666-0882 or any other county from IBP.

Thanks to Yolano Group and Yolo Audubon Society for contributing refreshments.

Survey Efforts...

continued from page 1

where breeding was observed, one has a history dating back to the early 1990's survey, and breeding was first documented on the other in 2003. At least 8 more owl blocks are scheduled to be visited in 2007, we're looking forward to doing complete and thorough analysis for each survey region as well as the entire state after the second year of field data have been collected. **We particularly need volunteers who are interested in surveying in Colusa and Sutter Counties.**

Thanks again to all volunteers who participated from Burrowing Owl Preservation Society and Yolo Audubon Society, they include: Neil Clipperton, Kirsten Dahl, Priscilla Hawkins, Cole Hawkins, Ursula Heffernon, Carolyn Hinshaw, Sarah Pitzer, Catherine Portman, Ian Taylor and Ed Whistler.

BOPS Outreach

BOPS education director Ursula Heffernon engaged Kristin Fullmore's Rio Linda 4th grade class in an hour long presentation about the life and biology of burrowing owls in our greater Sacramento area.

Power point, taxidermy mounts, as well as various art creations, inspired students to look at different ways they can help save BUOW populations and habitat. Interwoven with all, Ursula surprised them with an ancient Greek silver coin, dating back over 2100 years, depicting a BUOW on one side and the profile of goddess Athena on the other side.

Wrapping up the session, students created delightful images of burrowing owls with a "create-your-own-stamp" art contest depicting BUOW.



BOPS presented an education and fundraising table at Duck Days on February 24, 2007. The annual event was staged at Yolo Basin Foundation's exhibit hall in Davis, California. Students, as well as families and friends, enjoyed the interactive displays and activities that gave them the opportunity to learn more about Yolo wildlife.



What we work towards...

The Burrowing Owl Preservation Society is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and increase burrowing owl populations through research and education while promoting preservation, restoration, enhancement and management of burrowing owl habitat.



Where is the Burrowing Owl Conservation Plan?

By Catherine Portman

Many people mistakenly believe the burrowing owl is listed as endangered, and therefore protected, under State or Federal Endangered Species Acts. The burrowing owl is a Species of Special Concern. The following is taken from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) web site.

LISTS OF ANIMAL SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN AND SPECIES ACCOUNTS



AMPHIBIANS



BIRDS



FISHES



MAMMALS



REPTILES

(Though the burrowing owl is pictured, there is no information about the owl on the site)

What is a Species of Special Concern?

“Species of Special Concern” (SSC) status applies to animals not listed under the federal Endangered Species Act or the California Endangered Species Act, but which nonetheless 1) are declining at a rate that could result in listing, or 2) historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist. SSC share one or more of the following criteria:

1. occur in small, isolated populations or in fragmented habitat, and are threatened by further isolation and population reduction;
2. show marked population declines. Population estimates are unavailable for the vast majority of taxa. Species that show a marked population decline, yet are still abundant, do not meet the Special Concern definition, whereas marked population decline in uncommon or rare species is an inclusion criterion;”

The site lists a few more criteria but you get the idea. The species is in trouble. “This designation is intended to result in special consideration for these animals by the Department, land managers, consulting biologists, and others, and is intended to focus attention on the species to help **avert the need for costly listing under federal and State endangered species laws and cumbersome recovery efforts** (emphasis added) that might ultimately be required. This designation also is intended to stimulate collection of additional information on the biology, distribution, and status of poorly known at-risk species, and focus research and management attention on them.”

The Fish and Game Commission denied a petition (by Defenders of Wildlife, Santa Clara Audubon and others) to list the burrowing owl as Threatened or Endangered in 2004. On September 8, 2005 the CDFG sent a Biologist to the California Burrowing Owl Consortium meeting in Newark. The Biologist’s purpose was to solicit input for a “Conservation Strategy for Burrowing Owls in California”. To date, no Burrowing Owl Conservation Strategy has emerged from CDFG.

CDFG representative, Bill Boarman, was on the agenda of the California Burrowing Owl Consortium meeting this year, February 9, 2007. His topic was “Preliminary Info on CDFG Buow Conservation and Recovery Plan for California”. Mr Boarman began his talk saying that he was a consultant but the Department had not yet signed his contract to begin working on the Conservation Plan.

Every day, each of us witnesses the destruction of burrowing owl habitat. Daily we observe displaced owls. We see owls living on the edge....literally...on the edges of side walks, the edge of the road in storm drains, in the parking lot at Arco Arena, in Natomas roof drains! Yet, **three years** have passed since the denial to list the owl and **three years** since CDFG announced its intention to develop a Burrowing Owl Conservation Plan.

Please write Dan Steele, Program Manager, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA 94814 **or email** dsteele@dfg.ca.gov. Let Mr. Steele know there are tax payers interested in burrowing owl conservation. Ask when the Conservation Plan draft will be available. Tell him where you have seen displaced owls. Tell him passive relocation equates to active eviction. Tell him hack relocations are a critical component for burrowing owl conservation.

The Web of Life

This is a story about four living things. Their names are Everything, Something, Anything and Nothing.

Something, Anything and Nothing were all connected to Everything in a web of life. Nothing realized that when something happened to Anything, Everything was affected.

Since Anything depends upon Everything in the web of life, we need to make sure nothing we do ends up hurting Something.

Author Unknown
Oak Brook, Chicago, 2006

BOPS is Pleased to Announce the Winners of the 2006 Burrowing Owl Art Contest



1st Place, Alex Roy

Alex Roy of Davis, CA was the first prize winner. His pencil & crayon drawing depicted the owl active during day light, an avian predator and underground burrow with eggs. The judges were impressed with the scope of the environment Alex included in his colorful drawing. Alex's family tells us he is an ambitious and passionate artist.

Leila Siegel-Zigmund of Point Reyes Station was the second prize winner. Her crayon drawing depicted the owl in its ground burrow surrounded by short grasses.

Catherine Portman, co-founder of the Burrowing Owl Preservation Society, approached the directors with the idea of a student art contest. "Since education is a major part our mission, I thought enticing students with a cash prize to create burrowing owl art would be a fun way to get them to learn about the owl." The directors approved a \$100 first prize and a \$50 second prize. The art must include some aspect of the owl's biology or habitat. All media are accepted.

Ursula Heffernon, a California Credentialed teacher and Environmental Science Educator, was thrilled with the idea. "This is our second year hosting the student art contest. Everyone loves children's art. I'm sure the contest will become a tradition for the Society."

Other artful entries were from the Ramon Tafoya Elementary School in Woodland, CA. Students used water colors and colored crayons for their creations. Each contestant received a BOPS' "Dusk Buster" T-shirt.



2nd Place, Leila Siegel-Zigmund



Jasmine Madueño, 6th grade
Tafoya Elementary, Woodland



Katlyn Cleaver, 6th grade
Tafoya Elementary, Woodland



Vanessa Magdaleno, 6th grade
Tafoya Elementary, Woodland



Karen Zuniga, 6th grade
Tafoya Elementary, Woodland

Next year's art contest winners will be determined at the 4th annual Celebration of Burrowing Artists and Advocates in Yolo County. Entries are accepted throughout the year at Burrowing Owl Preservation Society, 14841 CR 91 B, Woodland, CA 95695. **Artists of all ages** using any art materials/media are welcome and encouraged to participate. Let others know about our contest, too!

Paparazzi

In the San Francisco Chronicle October 22, 2006 issue, Parade section, photographer, Matt Armanini's photograph of an incredible burrowing owl was selected. It was photographed on the train tracks in the Fremont-Newark area, Alameda County, CA. Matt had been observing four juveniles for the season around the tracks. He certainly captured the beauty of the owl trying to survive in an "iron jungle" instead of its native habitat.



"Who needs a sheep dog?" Photo By Jo Ellen taken November, 2006 in Yolo County



Solano Land Trust 20th Anniversary



Photo: James Steinert for SLT

The Solano Land Trust (SLT) a registered nonprofit organization is celebrating its 20th anniversary with more than 18,000 acres of land permanently protected in their trust! Their recent newsletter publication, the Solano Land Trust "VISTAS", features an interesting article by conservation biologist Andrea Henke on burrowing owls. Follow the links at www.solanolandtrust.org to learn more and order your copy of the Fall 2006 VISTAS issue. Help support their efforts in preserving burrowing owl habitat.

On The Web

Peregrine Productions is a unique video production company that creates engaging educational programs and documentaries focused on raising cultural and environmental awareness. Check out "Going Underground: The Natural History and Conservation of the Burrowing Owl" under program listings.

www.peregrineproductions.com

Are there any wine enthusiasts traveling to Oliver, British Columbia, Canada? Even if a Canadian trip is not in your future you can still try the vintages at Burrowing Owl Estate Winery by visiting their website where wines can be ordered online. Cheers!

www.bowwine.ca



Education

Students Giving a “HOOT”

The 2006-2007 BOPS in-school educational program started off with enthusiastic sixth graders once again! Teachers Ms. Odette Christensen and Mrs. Johanna Kyser and their 64 students of Tafoya Elementary School in Woodland, CA are in collaboration with BOPS.

BOPS education director Ursula Heffernon started off the year by writing grants to Yolo Community Foundation, Apple Tree Foundation and the Rufie Pease Foundation to help support our needs, in particular the purchase of two classroom sets of the Carl Hiaasen novel HOOT. Last year we only had one book to share for the entire class! Now each student can read along in class increasing their individual reading and comprehension skills. With further donations, we hope to increase our loaning library to 4 sets of HOOT books so that we can expand our program into more than 2 classrooms at a time.



Wild Horse Golf Course Habitat Survey Field Trip

“WOW! Sighting scopes are cool!” “Over there!”, “There’s one!” “Where? I don’t see one.” And so the chatter went as Ms. Christensen’s and Mrs. Kyser’s sixth graders experienced their first bird sightings of burrowing owls of all places, at a golf course! Wes Leith and Jim Rose of the Wild Horse Golf Course in Davis, CA were instrumental in setting up the collaborative efforts with the Burrowing Owl Preservation Society (BOPS) to provide this enriching opportunity for students at Tafoya Elementary School in Woodland.



As the students rotated through several predetermined sites, Jim and Wes engaged the students in learning about the immediate habitat of Burrowing owls (BUOW) and other native species that thrive there. Sighting scopes and binoculars were provided for the day by the Yolo Audubon Society which enhanced the students experience

as they sighted not only BUOWs but examined a beaver dam, river otter slides, Northern harriers, Canada goose, Red-tailed hawk, CA ground squirrels galore, and much more.

BOPS, in collaboration with management at Wild Horse Golf Course (WHGC), Davis, CA has afforded the opportunity of students visiting and providing a service-learning experience there. With the exceptional knowledge and care of employees Jim Rose and Wes Leith at WHGC, our students had an enriching education in the field at WHGC in February.

With the completion of their individual WHGC habitat evaluations, lively discussions took place back in the classroom on the positive and negative factors of the golf course habitat for Burrowing owl. Students are now ready to return to WHGC in late April to install artificial burrows with the assistance of Jim and Wes and other financial supporters. In this way, students can make a positive contribution to habitat improvement and the newer burrows will allow future biologists easier access

continued on page 8



Learning about artificial burrow construction with Jim Rose



Three in a burrow nest? How unusual!



What is a rodent mandible?

Field Trip...

continued from page 7

to the burrows to band chicks.

To round out their out-of-the-classroom experience for the day, students visited the California Raptor Center at the University of California, Davis. Over the course of three hours, students experienced first hand a variety of live raptors, learned about rehabilitation, explored their varied habitat needs and biology, and learned that birds of prey are especially vulnerable to changes in their habitat and are important indicators of the ecological health or decline of an area. Once again educator Jo Cowan and her staff provided outstanding presentations to our students. In turn, our students contributed funds to the "Adopt-A-Raptor" program to support the



needs of a bald eagle and a Swainson's hawk. Great fun and memories left with the students that day and hopefully this fieldtrip will help guide this generation in being more positively responsive to our environmental stewardship needs both today and in the future.

At left, Jo Cowan of the raptor center.

At right, Jo and student examine raptor x-rays.



Belly watching of Burrowing owls was super fun too!



Hoot, Hoot, Hoot!

from Buster & the BOPS Board of Directors



If I could smile and clap my talons I would, to thank each and every person that so generously donated to our first ever BOPS Holiday Fundraising Campaign! What a success! Just by chance, if you have not returned your intended donation, please feel free to "wing" it to BOPS to help fund our very active education and public outreach programs. Every \$ or heartfelt donation of skills, talent or time is most graciously appreciated.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Catherine Portman, President
(530) 666-0882
cportman@gmail.com

Pam Nieberg, Secretary/Treasurer
(530) 756-6856
pnieberg@dcn.davis.ca.us

Ursula Heffernon, Education Director
(530) 661-7030
uheffernon@pacbell.net



www.burrowingowlpreservation.org

501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization
EIN #55.086.2131