

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Status - Federal: None; State: Special Concern



Photo: Moose Peterson

Burrowing owls are small to medium-sized raptors characterized by their use of burrows for nesting. Typically, they enlarge abandoned squirrel or badger burrows, but many also use man-made structures, such as cement, asphalt, or wood debris piles; or openings beneath cement or asphalt pavement.

California Department of Pesticide Regulation
Endangered Species Program
<https://www.cdpr.ca.gov>



Burrowing Owl



Burrowing owls are yearlong residents of open, dry grassland and desert habitats. In the Imperial Valley they are often found along the earthen borders and dikes of irrigation channels.

Food

They feed primarily on insects, also small mammals, reptiles, birds and carrion.

Reproduction

Breeding occurs from March - through August, with peak in April and May. They typically lay clutches of 5-6 eggs. Young owls emerge from the burrow at about 2 weeks of age and fly at approximately 4 weeks. Burrowing owls are highly gregarious, often forming colonies of 10-15 burrows.

Distribution

They are widely distributed in proper habitats throughout the lowlands of the state. Although some individuals in the northern part of their range may winter south, most burrowing owls are resident in California.

Formerly fairly common in central and southern California coastal habitats, however, conversion of grasslands to agriculture, other habitat destruction, and ground squirrel control may have contributed to recent declines.