

# DEVELOPMENT AND BURROWING OWLS IN ARIZONA



**Don't let poor  
planning cause  
delays and cost  
you money!**

If you do not move this owl well before grading begins, it could delay your project, make enemies of the neighbors and possibly subject your company to fines for breaking a federal law: the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

## When is an owl in trouble?

Burrowing Owls can be found locally throughout Arizona where burrowing mammals, such as pocket gophers, prairie dogs and ground squirrels, dig their holes. The owls can then use those holes for homes. The most likely locations are flat and open areas with few tall trees. The owls prefer agricultural fields, canal banks, vacant lots, undisturbed natural desert grassland and open space near commercial buildings. Some land disturbance in these locations could displace or even kill an owl. Any site where mammal burrows are present that has planned canal maintenance, road maintenance or any upcoming earth-moving operation should be surveyed by an expert for Burrowing Owls before work begins.



## What is relocation?

Burrowing Owls can be safely captured by an expert and held at an approved care facility for later release to a site prepared with artificial burrows. By using this process, also known as active translocation, Wild at Heart has already relocated



# The Burrowing Owl Project

The Burrowing Owl is a small raptor that lives in underground burrows and eats mice and insects.

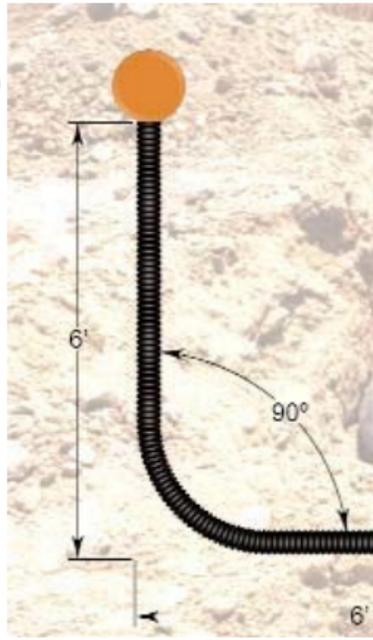


Because Burrowing Owls are frequently active during the day, nearby residents can become very attached to them and protective of their welfare. Unfortunately, in the past, heavy

equipment has often been used to prepare a site for development while owls were still living there, in many cases killing the adult owls and burying young in the nest.

The owls primarily breed in the spring and summer and occasionally in the other seasons. Moving federally protected Burrowing Owls out of the way is very inexpensive for a developer compared to a lengthy project delay. A licensed specialist, such as Wild At Heart, can remove the owls to an approved care facility and later relocate them to an appropriate area that won't be developed.

hundreds of Arizona owls to sites that are never expected to be disturbed in the future. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit is required to trap and remove the owls. The cost of materials for a single burrow ranges between \$25 and \$35, and digging the hole for installation is quick and easy with a backhoe. Typically, a colony of 6 to 10 owls is relocated at one time to a cluster of 16 to 20 burrows.



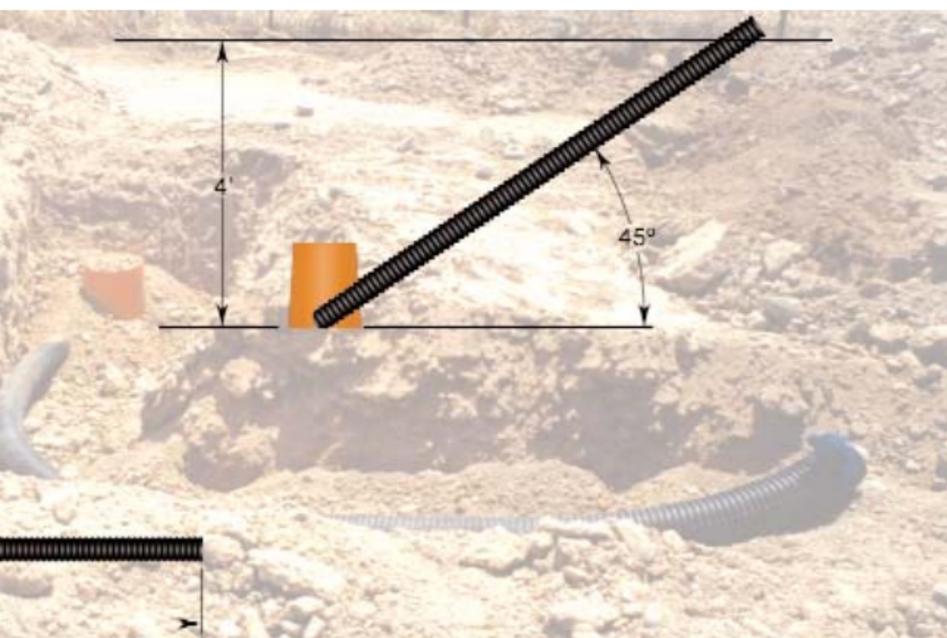
## Be part of the solution

Burrowing Owls are adorable animals that are entertaining to watch, and they catch insects and rodents that most people would rather not have around. In addition, the owls can be an important educational resource for schools and children. Help preserve this valuable natural resource by watching out for the owls to prevent their injury at job sites. At new project sites, artificial burrows can add value because they attract owls for all to

*The builder provided a backhoe and operator to excavate the hole for an artificial burrow.*



*Students digging a hole for an artificial burrow.*



*An artificial burrow consists of one 5 gallon plastic bucket and 12 feet of perforated drain pipe.*

enjoy. These can be installed in or near greenbelts, retention basins, open spaces, bike paths, storm water drainage channels and natural desert grassland.

## **Wild At Heart**

Wild At Heart is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of native wildlife in Arizona. Wild At Heart has met its conservation goals through the rescue and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned birds of prey, relocation of displaced raptors like Burrowing Owls, public education and wildlife habitat enhancement programs.

## **Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative (ABCI)**

ABCI is an Arizona Game and Fish Department program that brings together representatives from wildlife organizations, government agencies and private landowners. Partnerships are created to implement conservation projects that will benefit priority habitats and species identified in the Arizona Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan. This brochure was created by Wild At Heart, and ABCI funded the printing.

## For more information

- To report the location of a Burrowing Owl burrow that lies in the path of development or to request help in removing an owl, contact:

Bob Fox

Wild At Heart

31840 N. 45th St.

Cave Creek, AZ 85331

(480) 595-5047

- To request help in finding or evaluating a site for placement of artificial burrows and owls, contact:

Greg Clark

Burrowing Owl Habitat

650 S. 79th St.

Chandler, AZ 85226

(480) 961-4047

- For more information about the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative, contact:

Edwin Juarez



Arizona Game and Fish  
Department

2221 W. Greenway Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85023

(602) 789-3516

[ejuaraz@azgfd.gov](mailto:ejuaraz@azgfd.gov)

Visit the Wild At Heart Burrowing Owl Project Web site at [mirror-pole.com](http://mirror-pole.com) for details about owl removal, relocation and burrow installation locations.