

## cnews...

### Upcoming Events:

**April 20-22:** CNUW Earth Day Plant Sale (location and time to be announced).

### Note of Thanks:

On behalf of everyone at CNUW, we'd like to thank all of you who attended our Open House on March 9<sup>th</sup>. We welcomed a grand turnout of visitors, including many faculty and students who were formerly unaware of our facilities here on campus. Our hope is that you experienced an even deeper appreciation for desert wildlife, and that you gained a better understanding of why we are so passionate about preserving it.

### Mother Nature

### Pays Surprise Visit During CNUW Open House:

Approximately 135-145 people visited "Toad Hall" and other CNUW facilities during an open house held on March 9, 2005. Many had nice things to say about the exhibits and messages emphasized in Toad Hall and most seemed to enjoy themselves. In the early afternoon, CNUW staff was somewhat caught off-guard by a surprise visit from none other than Mother Nature herself. Mother Nature praised CNUW for its efforts in supporting native plants and desert landscaping, as observed in the Wildlife Demonstration Gardens in front of the Art Bldg., because, "This will give many of my other creatures a better chance of survival on the SCC campus." Mother Nature seemed particularly impressed with CNUW's efforts to educate the public about the importance of Sonoran Desert Biodiversity and said, "I have hope for the next generation of humans—maybe they will be more willing to share the resources of the earth with other species than your generation has been."

At one moment, Mother Nature did seem to become slightly agitated as she looked out over the vast green winter lawn that covers so much of the SCC campus and proclaimed, "Who among you thinks it's a good idea to use so much water on green lawns in an area that *I* felt should be a desert? I would have thought that you were at least wise enough to realize that water is precious here!" CNUW staff was unable to come up with anyone who thought it *was* a good idea.



## Meet Your Desert Neighbors: Feature: Burrowing Owl

By: Kathleen Grigg

Whoever heard of an owl that lives in the ground? I hadn't, until I came across one here at SCC standing outside of his burrow. I was quite startled to see him standing outside his burrow. He must have been startled as well because upon seeing me, his eyes widened in surprise before disappearing under the ground. Burrowing owls are one of the smallest owls in the Sonoran Desert, weighing only about 4 oz. They're appropriately camouflaged, with brown and white spotted coloring blending in to the earth beneath them. Another adaptation that young burrowing owls possess is the ability to scare off potential predators by producing a similar sound to that made by a rattlesnake. This owl has inhabited this area of land prior even to the building of SCC. Normally this owl would occupy the abandoned burrows made by animals like prairie dogs and desert tortoises. However, they will also accept human-created burrows, such as those made by CNUW members right here on campus—in fact, typically 4-5 nesting pairs have been found here each year, hatching about 5-6 young. Though their populations may be declining elsewhere, thanks to the efforts of concerned students and faculty, the burrowing owls seem to be thriving here on the SCC campus.



## Meet the Members of CNUW: Member Bio: Christopher Kolstad:

“I have been attending S.C.C. for two years, working towards a degree in landscape architecture. Like most students, I needed a Biology credit and so found myself in Roy Barnes Biology 105 class. This class was an investment in my future, as well as a real chance for me to verify my beliefs in the importance of the conservation of the Sonoran Desert. I've lived in south Scottsdale for 25yrs., and have stood by and watched one bad idea after another destroy the world around me. After approaching Mr. Barnes about my desire to help our local desert plants and animals, he offered me a post with CNUW. I have now worked for CNUW for two semesters, and have been able to do restoration work at Brown's Ranch, help with upgrades to Toad Hall, as well as to become an educator about Sonoran Desert biodiversity. I feel that the time and effort I've put in to CNUW has paid off both socially and academically.”

*\*Christopher was recently notified of his acceptance into the highly accredited and competitive Landscape Architecture program at ASU—we at CNUW congratulate him on this well-earned honor.*



## Tid Bits:

CNUW's Assistant Director, Stacy Pratt, is also involved with Maricopa County Master Gardeners and recently chaired the March 12<sup>th</sup> Real garden's For Real People Garden Tour.

Christopher Kolstad, a CNUW employee, is currently enrolled in University of Arizona's Master Watershed Stewards Program, entailing subjects like hydrology, water quality and water conservation.



## A "Small Scale" Visit to Toad Hall: S.C.C.'s Child Enrichment Center and Head Start Program classes visit Toad Hall and meet Mother Earth:

CNUW's Toad Hall tours have turned out to be an enriching experience for people of all ages, from S.C.C.'s faculty, staff and students attending the Open House on March 9<sup>th</sup>, to our most recent "small" guests. Though CNUW typically leads Educational Outreach tours for elementary aged students in the fourth to seventh grade age range, we were delighted to lead two tours for small classes of 3-5 year olds who attend S.C.C.'s Child Enrichment Center and Head Start Program this month. Dorian Sellers was the lucky CNUW employee to lead these ever-wondering groups around Toad Hall, identifying everything from live animals to different animal skeletons and replicas. While CNUW's mission statement is slightly more complex in comprehension for such a young age group, the children exhibited a budding interest in skeletons and animal life, according to one teacher, Candis: "The kids loved the hands-on exhibits, and the animal skeletons. It was a wonderful experience, and I'd definitely recommend the tour to our other classes here." Cathy, a teacher from the Head Start group remarked that "The Rosy Boa was a big hit with the kids," and a three-year old exclaimed when asked if she remembered what a snake uses its tongue for, "To smell!" Though all the information contained in Toad Hall may not be accessible to children so young, it is heartening to observe an expanding desire in children, even at this young age, to learn about, appreciate and be awed by the creatures so vital to and majestic within the Sonoran Desert where so often forgotten, ignored or unknown to most. We hope their visits fostered an ever-increasing wonder for these animals, and a passion for preserving their existence.