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Frodo to Visit SCC Life Sciences Building In Honor of SCC 35th Anniversary:

Frodo, a borrowing owl and a Liberty Wildlife “educational ambassador,” will be the guest of honor at the Life Sciences and CNUW Open House on November 16. This open house marks not only the Scottsdale Community College 35th anniversary, but the 35th continuous year that the burrowing owl, a Sonoran Desert native, has resided on the SCC campus. This owl like many indigenous species has faced increasing threats to its survival in connection with a growing human population throughout its range. And yet, this resilient little creature has managed to survive within the heart of an increasingly growing college campus.

The “Tribute to the Burrowing Owl” open house will be held in the Life Sciences Building lounge on **November 16, 2005 from 2:30pm to 4:30pm**. Owl cookies and punch will be served in the LS lounge, and CNUW and Life Sciences students will be available to accompany guests to Toad Hall and to the SCC greenhouse. The SCC greenhouse and Toad Hall are sites within SCC’s campus that offer information and direct viewing of many other Sonoran Desert native animal species, many of who have also resided on the SCC campus for years.

We cordially invite any member of the SCC faculty, staff, and student body, as well as any interested member of the community to join us on November 16 to honor the remarkable burrowing owl, and its residence at SCC for 35 years.



Adult burrowing owl; photo taken on SCC campus.

Meet Your Desert Neighbor: Feature: The Burrowing Owl:

By: Adrianna DeFranco

Walking near the parking lot on campus closest to the community gardens one day last spring, I heard a sound that terrifies most people living in the desert—an unmistakably threatening “rattle.” I, like most people, froze in fear as this sound emanated from a small hole in the ground. Much to my surprise and delight and I turned to see not a rattlesnake, but a very tiny, rather whitish *owl*. Remembering the sound I’d heard however, I figured an encounter with a rattlesnake was only a matter of time so I left in a hurry, feeling very sorry for the little owl. Later, however, I learned that the little creature I’d encountered was a juvenile burrowing owl, and that the rattle-like buzzing I’d heard was in fact coming from the young owl itself—when feeling threatened young burrowing owls can mimic the sound of a rattlesnake rattle to ward off predators, while adults oftentimes bob up and down in front of their burrows when threatened before diving into the burrows themselves. Burrowing owls are rather different from other owls in many ways; for example, while most owls are nocturnal, burrowing owls hunt mostly at dawn or dusk but are also often quite active hunters during the day. A second major difference is that this owl, as its name implies, lives not in a tree but rather in a burrow within the ground—a burrowing owl usually will not dig its own burrow, but relies heavily upon the abandoned burrows of other species such as prairie dogs for its shelter, which makes the survival of the prairie dog extremely important to the burrowing owl. A burrowing owl’s diet consists mostly of small mammals, but also includes reptiles, amphibians, small birds and even large insects like beetles and grasshoppers—this owl is actually acts as a quite effective form of pest control around agricultural areas because it eats such large quantities of insects; ironically however, use of chemical pesticides in or around agricultural areas has become an increasing threat to the burrowing owl’s survival. Another human-based threat that is significantly affecting this bird is the destruction of vital grassland or open desert habitat to agricultural or urban development. Still another threat that continues to threaten this specie’s survival is one that is directly connected to another specie’s survival—that of the prairie dog. Attempts to eradicate the prairie dog by ranchers and hunters on or near agricultural, ranch-land or other grassland areas have consequently led to a lack of adequate shelter/habitat for burrowing owls as well. The prevalent and unfortunate animosity towards prairie dogs will likely continue to negatively affect many species, like the burrowing owl, which depends on the same habitat for survival.

Here on SCC’s campus, efforts have been made to help keep the population of burrowing owls strong and successful. Faculty and staff from the Life Science department and CNUW have set-up several man-made nest boxes within the grounds of SCC in which several burrowing owls have taken permanent residence. To date, six breeding pairs of burrowing owls are known to exist within SCC’s borders, and with continued effort and assistance from an informed and conscientious community, we hope to see these numbers grow in the future.



Adult burrowing owl standing in front of its “burrow”;
Picture taken on SCC campus.

FUN FACT:

Did you know that as one of the smallest owls in the world, a typical adult burrowing owl is only 9”-10” in height and weighs only 4-6 oz?

Meet a New Member to “CNUW’s Family”: Hazel Simone Fisher

Stacy Fisher (formerly Stacy Pratt) Assistant Director at CNUW, recently gave birth to a very healthy baby girl, Hazel Simone. Stacy has been either volunteering or working with CNUW since 2000 in many varying capacities, and has been an enormously valuable member of the CNUW staff. Stacy is currently on leave, enjoying time with her beautiful new daughter. Congratulations Stacy and we miss you!



Hazel Simone Fisher