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common name	Burrowing Owl
scientific name	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>
phylum	Chordata
class	Aves
order	Strigiformes
family	Strigidae
habitat	grasslands, desert, farmland and shrubby fields
size	20 to 28 cm tall

- description** The Burrowing Owl is a small owl with very long legs and a short tail. The throat is white. The body is grayish-brown and spotted with white and the round head has a white stripe above the eyes. Their eyes are bright yellow.
- fun facts** The male Burrowing Owl stands guard outside his burrow for weeks, protecting his young. The sun bleaches his head feathers to a lighter color. By late summer, you can tell which owl is the male of a pair by his light-colored head.
- life cycle** The breeding season for Burrowing Owls begins in early March. After the female lays 7 to 9 eggs, she and the male take turns sitting on them. Three to four weeks later, the eggs hatch and fluffy chicks **emerge**. One by one, the chicks grow braver, leaving the burrow and wandering outside the entrance. The parent owls stay close by, delivering live prey to the young to teach them to hunt and kill. The young leave the parent owls at the end of the summer. By then they have grown their adult feathers and can hunt alone.
- ecology** These owls live in underground burrows, lined with feathers, pellets, grass and other objects. Despite their name, they usually do not dig their own burrows. They live in abandoned **mammal** burrows which they sometimes enlarge.

Burrowing Owls eat lots of insects, as well as ground squirrels, voles, mice, small birds, lizards and dead animals. They capture prey in many ways

including: diving from the air, gliding from a perch, and jumping on top of their prey from the ground. The main predators of Burrowing Owls are Swainson's Hawks, Great Horned Owls, Coyotes, foxes and raccoons.

**conservation** Like many animals and plants, Burrowing Owls live in places where people want to put houses and other development. Their habitat is disappearing quickly. Mammals like the ground squirrel dig the burrows where the owls live. However, some ranchers and farmers kill these mammals because they think of them as pests. This destruction of the mammals reduces habitat for the Burrowing Owl.

**investigate** There are only a few Burrowing Owls at Mather Field. You can tell if a burrow has been used by owls because there will be small, white droppings around the entrance. Sometimes the owls decorate the entrance with things they have found. Always keep your distance from the burrows so you don't scare the owls away.

