

Of all the birds, our Creator chose the Eagle to be the leader



Sky Hunters

Raptor Education and Rehabilitation

NOTES FROM THE NEST

WINTER 2014

GREETINGS and HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

The breeding year has come to a close and the number of incoming birds is starting to slow down.

We kept pretty busy this year but not in comparison to last year. I still think the drought kept some couples from starting a family due to reduced food availability—better not to have any offspring to feed!

Our barn owls were really down this year—we only took in 15! Last year we had 50 and in 2012 we had 100!

The great horned owls were about the same as last year with 20. We had only 1 burrowing owl and 5 little screech owls—so cute!!

Other numbers include 20 kestrels, 25 red-tailed hawks, 30 Cooper's hawks, 30 red-shouldered hawks, 7 peregrine falcons, and 2 osprey!

We don't usually care for osprey, but the Fund for Animals in Ramona was full up and asked our help, so we gave it a go!

Ospreys eat fish and dive into the water to catch their fish. So dear hubby John, got a large rubber livestock feeding pan with short-sides, and filled it with water and fish for feed. The fish floated and the birds ate!

Osprey are difficult to rehabilitate since they are a large wing-span bird, and not happy to be in captivity. **We were fortunate to release both ospreys back to the wild!!**

Blessings,
Nancy and John Conney

The intake of **peregrine falcons** this year is actually good news and proof that they now can be seen in our communities! Do you remember that this species was few and far between—an *endangered species*—for many years due to the pesticide DDT that thinned their eggshells and reduced reproduction to near zero. Use of DDT was banned and its presence in the environment has faded. Thanks to falconers, peregrine chicks were donated to the Peregrine Fund to be raised with puppets to reduce imprinting, and many falcons were banded and released. Their numbers in the wild continue to grow, and the species was removed from the endangered list in 1999. Just shows that reintroduction works!



Photo by Craig Koppie, USFWS

Get to Know Sky Hunters Education Raptors - Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)-

True to its name, the burrowing owl nests in a hole in the ground. Although it is quite capable of digging its own burrow, it often uses one already provided by prairie dogs, skunks, armadillos, or tortoises. Here in southern California, burrowing owls regularly use holes of California ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*). The San Diego Zoo is researching the relationship of the squirrels and owls—you can read more about that at:

<http://www.sandiego.com/articles/2011-08-29/san-diego-zoo-conservation-project-uses-squirrels-help-owls>.

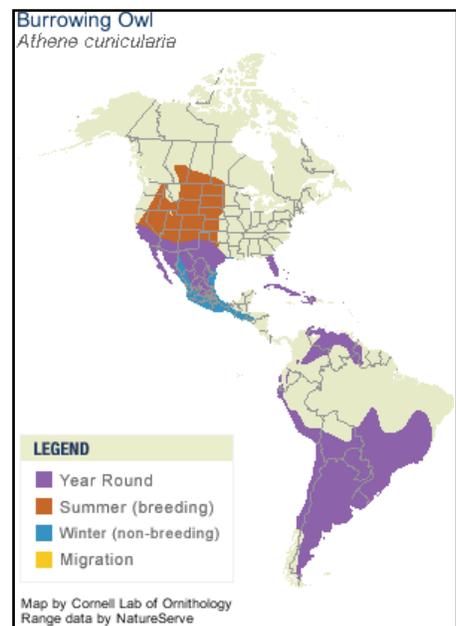
On this site, you've got to check out the awesome video of owlets and their parents at the burrow!!

Burrowing owls live in dry, open areas with no trees and short grass. They are also found in developed areas like golf courses, cemeteries, airports, vacant lots, university campuses, fields or pastures. The burrowing owl is diurnal—foraging during the day and night. In fact, it hunts all day and night long but is most active in the early morning and evening. Food items include insects, scorpions, small mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles. It catches more insects during the day and more mammals at night. Owls collect mammal dung and put it in and around their burrow. The dung attracts dung beetles, which the owl then captures and eats. Researcher can easily tell what owls have been eating from the regurgitated pellets of indigestible food like fur, bones, and beetle carapaces. Owls catch their prey like other raptors with their feet; they hunt by walking, hopping, or running along the ground, or by flying from perch.



Burrowing Owl

Photo by Stan Keiser, NatureLens



Your Help Counts! Sky Hunters Depends on You!



Donations keep Sky Hunters going in our mission to rescue raptors and educate the public about them.

Here's how you can help:

Purchase: The holidays are almost here, and our **bird nest boxes, t-shirts and greeting cards** with our bird's pictures on them make **great gifts!** We have barn owl, kestrel and screech owl boxes. Proceeds go to raptor food, medical expenses, and enclosure upkeep. Give us a call at **619-445-6565**.

Donate: Use Pay Pal by going to our website at: <http://skyhunters.org/funding.html>
Click on the funding link and scroll down to the **Make a Donation** button.

Sponsor: Fill out the application on this newsletter to join or sponsor at the support level that's right for you!

DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE!



*Thank you so very much to our
dedicated volunteers.*

*You make every raptor
returned to the wild possible!*

**Travis and Whitney Gray
Cathy Harrell
Terry Lockwood
Shawnie Williams**

*And HUGE THANKS to our
members and animal
ambassador sponsors!*

We have been keeping up with our school and community education programs!

Schools and campgrounds start booking in January. Call Nancy at 619-445-6565 to book your program.

Our next event is the California Open Wildlife Art Festival on February 14-15 at Liberty Station in Point Loma from 1-3pm. Come see us and the wonderful wildlife carving and art! And we will be at Agua Caliente Campground on February 28th at 3pm. Come see us in action!

Our spring newsletter will have a calendar of events for spring and summer!

Get to Know Burrowing Owls ...continued from page 2

Unlike most owls in which the female is larger than the male, the sexes of the burrowing owl are the same size.

Collisions with cars is a major source of mortality for burrowing owls. Populations declining in many areas, including coastal southern California, and is a species of concern. To help the species, many land managers are installing artificial burrows (see photo of owl at human-made burrow entry) and managing the habitat to keep it open—just like the owls need.

Thanks to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for species information—http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Burrowing_Owl/ id and the IUCN for status information— <http://cms.iucn.org/>



Burrowing owl at entrance to artificial burrow on the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Earl S. Cryer



Sky Hunters RAPTOR EDUCATION & REHABILITATION

Member and Sponsor Application

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