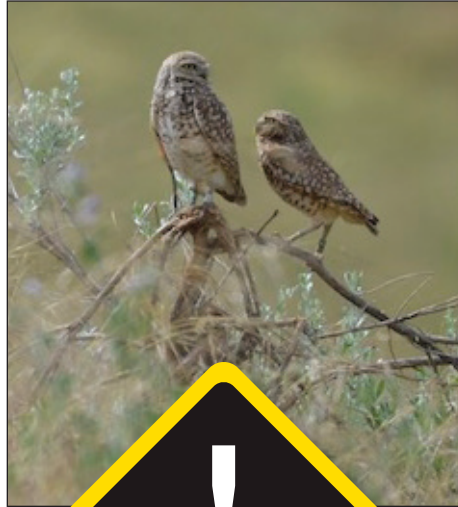


# Pellet Post

## Photographers need to stop stressing out the Burrowing owls



Lia McKinnon photos

By Lia McKinnon  
From a Facebook post

These are a few pictures taken in the South Okanagan of very, very stressed Burrowing owls.

I work with the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC. In 2020 we released 60 Burrowing owls into the grasslands of BC. We had 12 birds that returned successfully from their migration. These birds are listed as extinct in the wild in BC, and we are trying to bring them back. These pictures were taken as part of our monitoring program. Can you tell the owls are stressed? Unfortunately, at a couple of our sites we have been having problems with photographers harassing the owls—as in walking right up to nests and making perch points for better photos.

I know that 95% of wildlife photographers follow the rules and respect the animals they are trying to photograph but that 5% is a big problem for us. Different birds (both

individuals and species) react differently to human disturbance. Some can tolerate lots of human disturbance, Robins nesting in garages, killdeer in parking lots, but others will abandon their nests if disturbed, even once. Even if you think you are not disturbing a bird (it doesn't fly off, it isn't alarm calling etc.) the bird still might not be acting normally. For example, it might

be guarding its nest rather than foraging, leading to less food for their young and lower survival.

If photographers continue to be a problem at known Burrowing owl sites, we are going to have to abandon those sites. That means there won't be owls at the sites to photograph, but it also means that we will need to find another sliver of intact habitat for the owls, and intact grassland



is hard to find. We will also need to dig in new burrows, which is both expensive and time consuming.

We ask that anyone who finds a Burrowing owl in the wild stay at least 50 meters back especially between April and August when they are nesting.

Harassing Burrowing owls, or their nests, is illegal according to Section 34 of the BC Wildlife Act. Please reconsider nest photography in general as it is very stressful for birds, and help us to spread the word.

If you have photographed or have seen a Burrowing owl and you are not sure if this is a known release, or perhaps a new owl returning to a new site, please contact us at boc-sbc@gmail.com for more information, and to help us with our reintroduction program.

We have an informative brochure at this link:

► [www.burrowingowlbc.org/images/News-letters/BUOWconservation\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.burrowingowlbc.org/images/News-letters/BUOWconservation_Brochure.pdf)



# Patti Beer and Steve Church: Looking back at 30 years

By Patti Beer

Patti Beer and Steve Church have been active team members of the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society for 30 years! Patti joined the Stanley Park Ecology Society (at one point the Zoological Society) after attending a talk at the Rose Garden Cottage in Stanley Park. She was taken by Mike Mackintosh's warm welcome and the quality talk and discussion that night. Patti started helping with barn owl box installations, urban coyote phone surveys, Beaver Lake enhancement projects and sitting in a blind taking notes on Burrowing owl behaviour for a study being done on owls in Mike's care in Stanley Park.

Mike invited Patti along on the second Burrowing owl field trip to Kamloops and she was smitten by the rag-tag group that was not just talking about conservation, they were getting down and dirty!

When she returned home gushing about how fun the trip was and all that was going on up there, Steve looked at her and responded simply with, "Can I come next time?"

Little did they know how solidly these charming little owls and this eclectic, enthusiastic, multitiered group would wind their way into their hearts and lives with Mike as the fearless (very good at schmoozing) leader!

With Kinsey, their baby daughter in a backpack, they helped build a facility for rearing Burrowing owls in South Surrey and became the

Sunday owl feeders! Kinsey now 23 and Desmond 21 were involved in that commitment over the years. The owl facility subsequently moved to Port Kells and our family commitment continues.

In honour of the 30 years, here is the Beer/Church top 10 list of favourite things about the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC.

**1** Burrowing owls are a beautiful, funny, endangered species that needs our time and attention. Who can resist those bright yellow eyes, the diminutive size and what a great ambassador they make for the whole grassland ecosystem!

**2** The amazing and passionate people we work with and have participated with over the years. The core group of volunteers here has been with the group for as long as we have and have become like family to us! The more recent members bring refreshing perspective and have energized our group with new enthusiasm for this important work!

**3** The Burrowing Owl Vineyard!!! Jim and Midge Wyse and family have been so supportive of our work in every way. The tasting room finances, the gracious hosting of AGMs, the raising of the profile of this species with their branding, social media, events in the gift shop, Jim's participation on our board and of course... the WINE!!!! We could not have done this journey without them!

**4** The gracious hosts of our rearing facilities at



Patti with daughter Kinsey at the South Surrey breeding facility.

– Beer/Church photo

BC Wildlife Park, SORCO, Monika and Frank, Jim and Ilse Wallace in conjunction with Kim Cheng from UBC. We could not have done this work without their land, facilities, time and more!

**5** Time on the ranches in Merritt, Kamloops, Oliver, Cache Creek and the wonderful ranch owners and ranch hands that opened their gates, homes, hearts and mind to this group and its dream to



Kinsey and Desmond at Frank and Monika's.

– Beer/Church photo





Steve and Kinsey lunching with the owls.

- Beer/Church photo



BOCSBC volunteers. - Beer/Church photo



BOCSBC volunteers during construction of the South Surrey breeding facility. - Beer/Church photo

help this species. There really is nothing like getting out on the grasslands and rolling up your sleeves to take you out of the everyday hustle. Our communal meals over the years with these lovely down

to earth people, made our time up there in their company very sweet indeed.

**6** The joy of raising and releasing these beautiful little owls every year. From the tiny fluff balls to the

pop-can-sized adults: what is not to love! And it was very satisfying to see them out in the wild and band their new babies after the release!

**7** Good hard manual labour in varying temperatures - hot to bloody cold and soaking rain some years! It sure felt good to just get out and dig! Each year we learned more about the habitat, needs, and plight of these birds!

**8** Beautiful road trips from our home in South Surrey up to the interior a couple of times a year! In all kinds of weather from TooMuchSnow.com to gorgeous sunny drives and everything in between! All with a warm welcome at the end of the journey, the team, dear friends and even staying with relatives added to these great trips! And OH THE STORIES to tell about these adventures!!!

**9** The government officials, researchers and organizations that have helped our group and at times worked

alongside us over the years. From the Ministry of Environment staff to the Calgary Zoo team, to Aimee's work on soft releases, to Troy and his group of Canada-wide Burrowing owl recovery, to the Osoyoos, Upper Nicola and Penticton Indian Bands, to the network that Mike, Lauren, Lia and Charyl have built with people at conferences and in the field. The list could go on as you can imagine over 30 years. This support has been phenomenal!

**10** Our children growing up with a bigger picture of how we as humans fit in to our world. It is probably no surprise that Kinsey ended up as a bird fanatic! We were so blessed as a family to have these opportunities to connect so directly with the natural world.

**11** Successfully returning Burrowing owls! Always a thrill and a good reason to make this a "Spinal Tap" list and going to 11 with it!



Kinsey takes a break on a burrow digging expedition.

- Beer/Church photo



# They called him Mister B



Portrait of Mr. B. – Nick Murphy watercolour

By Mike Mackintosh

Those of us who care for Burrowing owls love and appreciate them all. But there are always the ones we come to recognize as special... some intangible little behaviour, some quirk of personality, some demonstration of character, or defiance in their manner. These are the little owls that we find so endearing.

One such little owl was W/B: no special name for him. Somehow, his leg band letters were all he needed. He was just, W/B. For those who knew his early history, that name was all he needed.

W/B's story began at the Port Kells Breeding facility. He was hatched in 2005, from young parents, one of a large brood, with seven brothers and sisters. His first few months were unremarkable, up to the day in late April 2006.

He was released back into the wild, at a burrow site in

the heart of the Beresford grasslands. The release was less than spectacular. Within two days, he was gone without a trace, given up for lost. W/B disappeared off the radar completely. Field teams never saw a sign of him for the rest of the summer.

Fast forward to November 2006 and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency offices off of Still Creek Road in Burnaby (near BCIT) where a concerned employee discovered a small owl cowering against a window, trying to evade the attacks of menacing crows.

Still Creek is the bedroom to thousands of crows that congregate each evening, so W/B was in trouble. Fortunately, that employee then called OWL (Orphaned Wildlife Rescue), who dispatched a rescue team to pluck this tiny, very vulnerable little Burrowing owl from almost certain death.

And so it came to be that on November 12th 2006, W/B came in from the cold.

He had completed the cycle from hatching and release, to an unknown, but successful, life in the wild. Finally, he had survived a chaotic migration that had not gone as well as hoped. Nonetheless, W/B



W/B with Gerry Powers.

– BOCSCB photo

was returned to his birthplace at the Port Kells Breeding Centre.

One thing was always very notable about W/B: he was a very handsome owl. For those of us that know them well, he was a very good-looking little bird of prey.

After his adventures of the release year there was almost a certain cockiness about him. The way he carried himself, one could almost believe that he knew he was something special. And much like a racehorse put out to stud after an illustrious career, the decision was made to keep W/B in the Port Kells breeding program.

After a bit of a shaky start, W/B settled in with his mate, X/X. Now X/X was a bit of a terror, but the two owls hit it off very quickly.

Their breeding home was Pen Number 2, and every spring for several years thereafter, they would settle into their love nest quite comfortably. Despite being the poster





W/B at the entrance to his Port Kells burrow. – BOCSBC photo



Sharing a perch at Port Kells. – BOCSBC photo

boy for macho owls, W/B was a very devoted father.

The owl care team always delighted in watching W/B dutifully carry the pieces of food (usually mice) from the enclosure door to the burrow



W/B with Mike Mackintosh. – BOCSBC photo

entrance (where X/X was inside, managing a brood of rapidly growing owl chicks, all demanding more food.)

“Mr. B” would dutifully (and very delicately) place each food item just inside the burrow. Later he would be seen standing impassively on a nearby perch or crouched on a nearby mound of earth, waiting for his next duty.

W/B lived a long, very productive life at Port Kells, siring over 25 young over the years. He passed away in 2017 at the ripe old age of 12 years. His passing was a very sad occasion for the owl care staff.

W/B was always calm and relaxed around people. Perhaps his early experiences were a reason for this, but I wonder.

Burrowing owls are often considered to be characters, given human characteristics (rightly or wrongly) by their caregivers. But to all that observed him closely, W/B had a unique personality... a “one of a kind” little owl.

## BurrowBriefs

### Crescent Point Energy invests in Calgary Zoo wildlife protection programs



Burrowing owls are an indicator species of the overall health of grassland ecosystems. – Calgary Zoo photo

**By Colleen Schmidt**  
**CTV News**  
**March 30, 2021**

Two wildlife conservation programs at the Calgary Zoo have received a significant financial boost from Crescent Point Energy.

The Calgary-based company is supporting the zoo’s new Wildlife Conservation Centre and investing \$100,000 to help construct a new breeding and research center to support the sustainability of Burrowing owls.

It has also committed \$50,000 to the Saskatchewan Species at Risk program for research and reintroduction work.

In a press release, Crescent Point Energy President and CEO Craig Bryks said, “We are particularly proud to support the Saskatchewan Species at Risk program, which provides funding for conservation ecologists and researchers to conduct meaningful work to sustain and nurture species who depend on prairie habitats throughout Saskatchewan.”

“We are also excited to an-

nounce our support of their new Wildlife Conservation Centre (WCC) as a founding sponsor. The new WCC aims to further support the zoo’s work as a global leader in conservation breeding and reintroduction programs for a broad range of wildlife and native species.”

Zoo officials say the investment will have a positive impact on wildlife protection programs.

Crescent Point Energy’s support for the zoo’s Saskatchewan Species at Risk program and construction of the new Wildlife Conservation Centre is expected to help restore endangered species, including Burrowing owls.

For more information on projects at the Calgary Zoo, visit the website.

- ▶ [calgary.ctvnews.ca/crescent-point-energy-invests-in-calgary-zoo-wildlife-protection-programs-1.5368211](https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/crescent-point-energy-invests-in-calgary-zoo-wildlife-protection-programs-1.5368211)
- ▶ [www.calgaryzoo.com/news/conservation-first-alberta-calgary-zoo-releases-15-burrowing-owls](https://www.calgaryzoo.com/news/conservation-first-alberta-calgary-zoo-releases-15-burrowing-owls)



# COVID Projects 14 & 15

By Jim Wyse

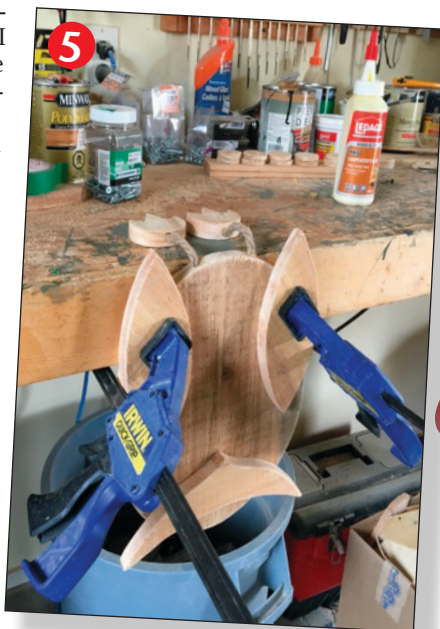
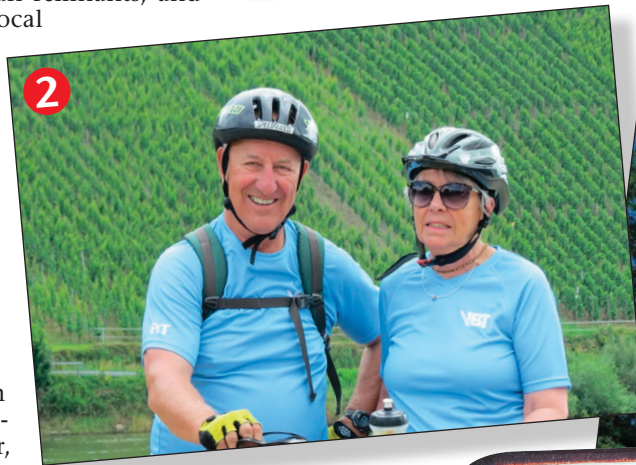
Five years ago, during the spring of 2016, Midge and I had the good fortune to take a two-week bike and barge tour down the Mosel River on the barge "IRIS", starting in Luxembourg and France, then heading northeast through northern Germany to where the Mosel joins the Rhine River at Koblenz (Vermont Bicycle Tours) **1 2**.

As you may have already guessed this route passes through the heart of the German wine country. As in most European travel, this itinerary was also loaded with everything from castles to bell-makers, to Roman remnants, and plenty of food and local wine to complement the experience. Great fun! **3**

In a quaint German village, somewhere along the way, Midge spotted this humorous owl made out of old barn siding, hanging on a store-front door, and snapped a cell phone photo of it. **4**

Here we are now, in the middle of a pandemic four years later, looking for things to occupy our time. So, in March, 2020, I dove back into our multitude of photographs collected since the digital age began, in an effort to organize them into some kind of sensible order. That is when I re-discovered the photo of this gorgeous little owl!

Bingo!! A 'COVID project' was born. I have a wood-work shop, and all the necessary tools. The plan was that I would make a few of these owls out of mostly wood scraps, and sell them in the Wineshop to raise a few bucks for the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society (BOCS). Great idea! **5**



Our 'model' is obviously the European equivalent of a great horned owl. We now call him Olly. My plan for Phase-1 of this COVID Project #14 would be to make six Olly's. Then, if all went well, to increase the number for Phase-2 and beyond.

So, after some careful drafting and scaling, the dimensions were carefully transferred from the photograph, followed by the pattern making for all the components, and then shortly, the building began. **6**

Getting the 'perfect' owl eyes was a challenge.

Midge correctly suggested that I scoot up to Penticton to the sewing store (Fabricland), where I would find eyes that were used for stuffed animals like Teddy Bears, and she was right. These 30 mm plastic eyes came in packages of two, and cost about \$5.00 per package. I bought six packs for \$30.00 to fulfill the Phase-1 requirements of six owls.

The more I thought about it, the more it bothered me that I had just paid \$3.00 per eye! So later that evening I searched on-line for bulk sales of 30 mm plastic animal eyes. And guess what? Within a short time, I had found the exact same eyes available in batches of 50, for \$11.00, plus shipping of about



\$4.00, or 30 cents per eye. When they arrived after about 10 days, not surprisingly, they were precisely the same eyes as those sold in the two-packs at the sewing store for 10 times the price! <sup>7</sup>

However, in terms of COVID projects, I had just committed to produce 25 more owls to use up all those eyes.

To give these Olly's that weather-beaten wood look, I found this light grey wood stain that is called "weathered wood". What could be more perfect than that?

Here is my final "Olly" design. <sup>8</sup>

With six Olly's completed, the thought occurred to me, that it might be appropriate and fun, to create a Burrowing owl in the same 'craft' style. The most distinguishing feature of Burrowing owls, I believe, is that white eye-brow over the eyes that always make them look like they are scowling! That had to be the distinguishing feature.

So, after all of that, here are the first three Burrowing owls that have been completed. <sup>9</sup>

We've settled on the name Beaker (named after you-know-who) for these birds. These were the proto-types with each of the above made from different types of wood from my scrap pile and with different stain colours. We decided that the final version would be made from rough cedar, similar to the Olly's, but the body stained in a weathered brown colour stain.

The other modification that has been made is that the outline around the eyes is yellow, just like the real birds. Developing this hanging "Beaker" owl has been COVID Project #15 for me.

Our wineshop manager suggested that I should sign and number the backs of these "creations" to help boost the sales! So, I did. I'm not sure about the 'boosting' comment. I am now almost finished producing about 30 of these owl hangings in total, and I feel that the COVID pandemic is almost behind us. So, the timing for these two projects has been very, very good. Plus, if they all sell when things get back to normal, the Society will be \$6,000 richer!



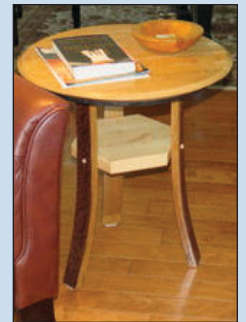
# You can adopt an Olly or a Beaker

Every owl is numbered and signed by Jim Wyse. They are available for purchase in the wine shop at The Burrowing Owl Estate Winery or you can send an email to [bocsbc@gmail.com](mailto:bocsbc@gmail.com).

Olly and Beaker are each \$199.

The wine shop is also selling Jim's wine barrel tables for \$499.

100% of the proceeds from these sales will go directly to supporting the work done by the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of British Columbia.





# 2020: The year in review

Lauren Meads and Lia McKinnon

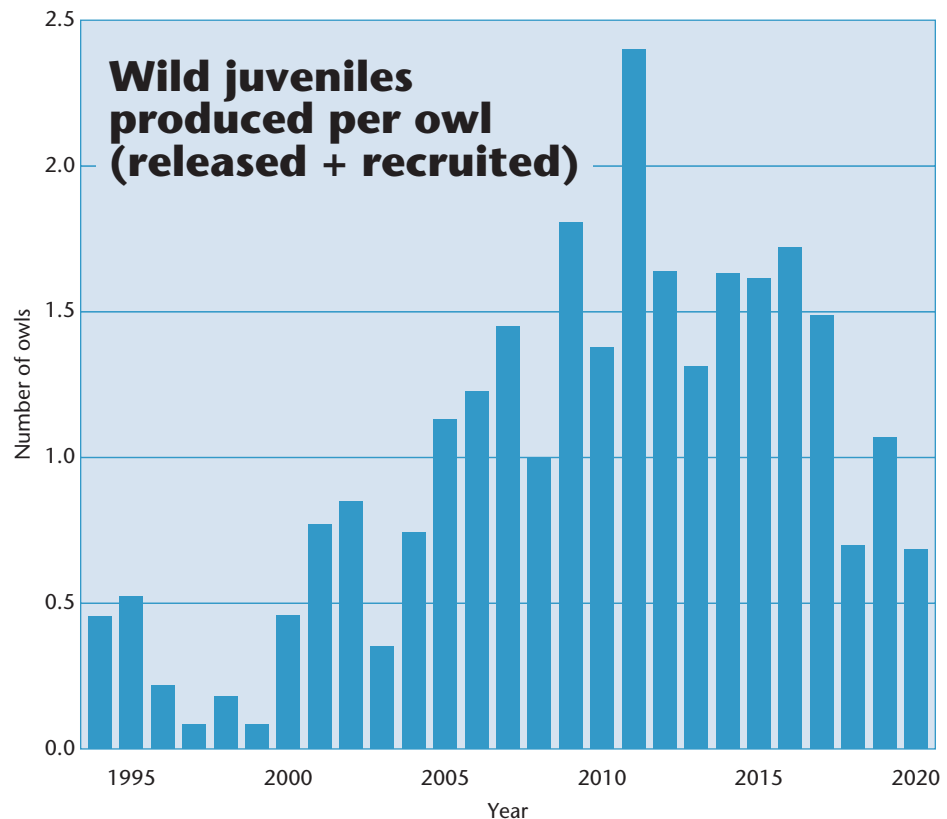
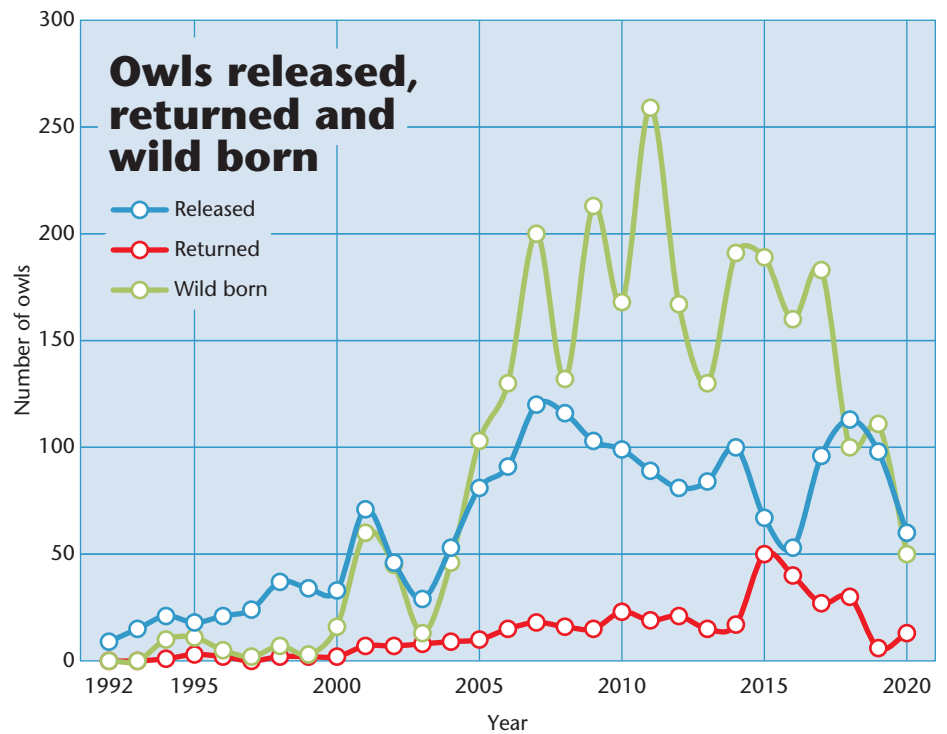
Many events transpired in 2020 that drastically changed some of our procedures. The main one was and still is the global Covid-19 pandemic. As we were preparing to begin our field season, we had to quickly pivot from utilizing many volunteers to a bare bones staffing. Lauren Meads (Executive Director) was also off as of January 2020 for the year on maternity leave. She did however come and help when she could with gaps in volunteers at the Oliver facility.

However, we were able to still have a great field staff composed of Lia McKinnon (head field biologist), Charyl Tennant (field assistant in the Nicola Valley) Dawn Brodie (Upper Nicola Band field biologist) and Dave Low (Lac Du Bois). Due to the pandemic, we had no volunteers in the field (except a couple of our directors who helped at the Chutter ranch) and no fall field trip.

In 2020 we released 60 owls from our captive program along with 13 returning owls which produced 50 wild born young. The release was very different this year. A quick sorting of the owls was conducted with Tracy (from the BC Wildlife Park), Mike, Lia and Charyl.

The owls released only had their G/B bands on. This was in accordance with recommendations from the banding office to minimize bird handling, so a decision to not place USFW bands on the released birds was made. However, when the young in the field were banded, they were given both bands. As well, soft-release caging was not deployed this year due to shortages in staff and volunteers.

This year was still tough on returns, however there was an uptick in the numbers compared to last year.

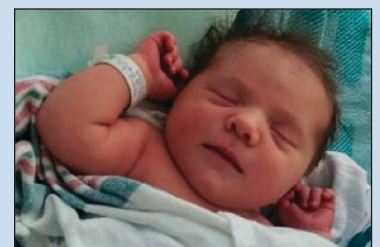


## Two new additions to the owl family



January 11, 2020  
Daniel Timothy Meads Robishaw - born to Lauren Meads and her husband Tim Robishaw

November 2, 2020  
Everly Rose Tennant - born to Charyl Tennant and her husband Dylan Tennant





## BurrowBriefs



# Don Gillis of Umatilla Chemical Depot passes away

East Oregonian  
May 17, 2021

Don Gillis, the former natural resources manager for the Umatilla Chemical Depot, passed away in April at the age of 73.

Gillis worked at the depot for 15 years and was instrumental in leading the efforts to ensure the survival of the Western Burrowing owl at the depot.

In 2007, Gillis noticed a decline in the nesting areas for the Burrowing owls at the depot. He contacted Mike Gregg, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wild-

life Service, who put him in contact with Dr. David Johnson of the Global Owl Project.

With funding from various organizations, in 2008 Gillis and Johnson with biologists, volunteers, and depot employees began building and installing artificial burrows.

"When this project started, none of us foresaw how successful it would be," Gregg said.

In 2011, Gillis and the depot received the U.S. Fish and Wildlife National Military Conservation Partner Award after being nominated by Gregg.

Between 2009 to 2020, there have been 542 nests on the Umatilla Chemical Depot and 2,004 Western Burrowing owls have been banded — a sharp increase from the three to four nesting pairs that called the depot home in 2008.

"The depot has more owls than any place else in the entire Pacific Northwest. Had we not put in artificial burrows, the owl numbers would have zeroed out about 2010," David H. Johnson, director of the Global Owl Project, said.

"The value of the Umatilla depot to the owl population in British Columbia,



(LEFT) Don Gillis holds a Long-eared owl at Umatilla. — Umatilla Chemical Depot photo

(ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT) Don Gillis with Lauren Meads, Paul Williams and Mike Mackintosh while on a 2012 BOCSBC trip to Umatilla.

— BOCSBC photo

Oregon and Washington is really phenomenal and truly significant. With 40 to 60 pairs nesting each year, the depot is the anchor population that critically supports the owls in the region."

Originally from Walla Walla, Washington, Gillis' career as a civilian military employee included decades of natural resource management and preservation.

"Family, friends, shipmates and coworkers all said Don was always kind, supportive, helpful and never a harsh word spoken about him," he said.

Gillis is survived by his wife, Valerie, sons Peter and Daniel, and siblings Hallie, William (Buzz), and Veronica. Due to COVID restrictions, the family will have a private memorial.

Michele Lanigan, a longtime friend and employee at the depot, noted that Don posted on Facebook before he passed, "Life is good and then you die. I concentrate on the first part."

► [www.eastoregonian.com/news/local/former-natural-resources-manager-for-umatilla-chemical-depot-passes-away/article\\_cbd54fa0-b3ff-11eb-bb3c-27436b51e659.html](http://www.eastoregonian.com/news/local/former-natural-resources-manager-for-umatilla-chemical-depot-passes-away/article_cbd54fa0-b3ff-11eb-bb3c-27436b51e659.html)



## BurrowBriefs



### Mayo Clinic in Phoenix gives new home to displaced Burrowing owls

By: Nicole Grigg,  
ABC News 15  
May 17, 2021

Two pairs of Burrowing owls were released to Mayo Clinic to help them live in a temporary habitat before transitioning back to the wild.

Dr. Catherine Chong, a physician with Mayo Clinic along with researchers from Arizona State University and Wild at Heart Raptors, a local rescue group, built temporary, artificial burrows where the captured owls can recover.

The Burrowing owls lost their home because of a new development going up in Buckeye.

The groups worked together to build the artificial burrows with the hope that they'll want to stay.

"We really hope that our new neighbors will provide an opportunity for staff and for patients to step out of the mind's default mode of worry, anxiety, and business, and into the present moment," said Dr. Chong.

Chong is a researcher who studies headaches for Mayo

Clinic, but is stepping outside of her expertise to help save these animals.

Mayo Clinic has walking trails at its Phoenix location that patients, doctors and employees are able to use and the plan is to provide a view of nature if the owls decide to make the artificial burrows their home. The clinic plans to provide signs and a live camera feed to share with staff and patients.

Wild at Heart says that Burrowing owls often become victims of new construction in the southwestern part of the U.S.

They have helped build over 6,000 artificial burrow habitats and provided homes for over 2,500 Burrowing owls.

Wild at Heart tracks sightings of Burrowing owls, which you can find here...

► [mirror-pole.com/maps/maps\\_test\\_2/store\\_markers/index.html](https://mirror-pole.com/maps/maps_test_2/store_markers/index.html)

► [www.abc15.com/news/uplifting-arizona/groups-release-endangered-burrowing-owls-back-into-the-wild](https://www.abc15.com/news/uplifting-arizona/groups-release-endangered-burrowing-owls-back-into-the-wild)

The society's re-introduction program would not be possible if not for the participation of the landowners in the Nicola Valley and South Okanagan who generously allow the Burrowing owls to be released on their property.

Hats off to the kind folks at Deleew

### Hats off to the landowners

## Burrowing brews

In the Green Gables neighborhood of Phoenix, Arizona there is a niche brewery called Wren House.

Led by head brewer Preston Thoeny, the brewhouse focuses on quality and the exploration a wide range of brewing techniques and styles.

In 2020 and 2021, Wren House has undertaken a unique collaboration with Audobon Arizona (now Audobon Southwest) and Wild at Heart Raptors in the release of two specialty brews in celebration and support of Burrowing owls.

Burrowing owls were once common in Phoenix, but development, climate change, and other threats put them at risk of disappearing from the landscape.

On November 18, 2020, Wren House released a special lager. "U-9" (named for his band number) is such a character – despite his quirky behaviors, his steely resolve to survive made him quite the survivor and pioneer.

Found on the ground in 2016, U-9 allowed himself to be caught by an animal control officer in Casa Grande. Off to Wild at Heart Raptor Center he went, and after examination and observation, he was

pronounced uninjured and entered the relocation program. Read the rest of his story here:

► <https://az.audubon.org/news/downtown-owls>

Then on March 16, 2021 Wren House released a second collaborative effort with Audubon Southwest, and Wild At Heart Raptors, named for a striking Burrowing owl. "Blondie" was a biologist's dream, lighter plumaged than typical Burrowing owls, she was easy to identify

and track. Blondie hung out with a few other owls along a crumbling quarry pit wall at Rio Salado. The owls lived within the transitory

tunnels of Rock Squirrels and apparently a few were able to pull off broods each year and keep the group going.

Nearby vehicular traffic was ever present, and

heavy equipment made regular appearances to Blondie's pit. Workers avoided the owl area, but regardless of machinery, fragile walls like these regularly deteriorate. Read more about Blondie here:

► [az.audubon.org/news/blondie-ipa](https://az.audubon.org/news/blondie-ipa)  
► [www.wrenhousebrewing.com](https://www.wrenhousebrewing.com)



Ranch, Haughton Ranch, Guichon Ranch, Chutter Ranch, Frolek Cattle Co., Elkink Ranch and Douglas Lake Cattle Company, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Nature Trust of BC, The Province of BC, Penticton Indian Band and Upper Nicola Band.





## BurrowBriefs

# Art Gallery of Ontario acquires owl painting



By Nathan Taylor  
VillageMedia.ca  
Dec 15, 2020

An Orillia artist has found a big-time buyer for two of his paintings.

The Art Gallery of Ontario has purchased two of Travis Shilling's works from his 2019 series Tyrannosaurus Clan for their permanent collection.

"It was really exciting," Shilling, a Canadian-Ojibwe artist said of getting the call from the AGO. "I didn't know how to feel about it."

He's had time to think about that, though, and can say it feels "special."

Shilling began painting when he was in high school. His father, the well-known and talented Arthur Shilling, of Rama First Nation, died when Travis was seven. The family kept his studio shut, but a large canvas as well as many supplies remained inside.

At 15, Shilling went back into his father's studio, gathered some of those supplies and began painting. He moved to the big city when he was 17 to study at the Toronto School of Art. Money was

tight, so he took advantage of the AGO's free admission on Wednesday nights. That's when he really gained an appreciation for the artists showcased and fell in love with oil painting.

The two pieces purchased by the AGO are called Owl and The Excavators. The entire Tyrannosaurus Clan show was inspired by pipelines, particularly on First Nation lands, and everything that comes with them — the protests, the crews who work on them, the spirits disturbed by them, both humans and other animals.

"I just started to think about what they were digging up. I started to think about artifacts, the past," Shilling said.

The pipeline workers crossed his mind, too. He knows people who have worked on such projects. Some have shared with him their stories of the animals they've seen — animals that have never seen excavators and pipelines.

- ▶ [www.midlandtoday.ca/local-news/art-gallery-of-ontario-purchases-two-paintings-by-area-artist-3184964](http://www.midlandtoday.ca/local-news/art-gallery-of-ontario-purchases-two-paintings-by-area-artist-3184964)
- ▶ [www.travisshilling.com/](http://www.travisshilling.com/)

## Donate to the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society

If you can make a tax deductible contribution, the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC (BOCSBC) would be extremely grateful.

We are always looking for donations to keep our program going, whether it be for soft release cages, field work, owl food, equipment, or the breeding facilities' supplies and maintenance.

Donating is easy, and it can be either done by mail, or online on our website at this link:

- ▶ [www.burrowingowlbc.org/index.php/donor-form](http://www.burrowingowlbc.org/index.php/donor-form).

**Thank you so much for helping us to build on our progress!**

## Meet the BOCSBC board of directors

Here is the list of Directors and their roles. If you want to volunteer please contact the society at [bocsbc@gmail.com](mailto:bocsbc@gmail.com).

- **Mike Mackintosh**, Vancouver, BC:  
Chair of the Board and Founder
- **Lauren Meads**, Kaleden, BC:  
Executive Director
- **Jim Wyse**, Oliver, BC:  
Vice Chair, Finance and Fundraising Director
- **Adrienne Clay**, Kamloops, BC:  
Director at Large in Kamloops
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Science Director
- **Tracy Reynolds**, Kamloops, BC  
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- **Elaine Humphrey**, Victoria, BC:  
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- **Cliff Lemire**, Vancouver, BC:  
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- **Jack Madryga**, Merritt, BC:  
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- **John Gray**, Vancouver, BC:  
Director at Large
- **Steve Church**, Burnaby, BC:  
Director at Large

## Thanks to our sponsors...

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## ... and our partners

- Monika and Frank Tolksdorf
- BC Wildlife Park
- SORCO: Raptor Rehab Centre
- Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society



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