



## Western Burrowing Owl Awareness

ADOT Environmental Planning

1611 W. Jackson St- Mail Drop EM02

Phoenix, AZ 85007

*The purpose of this flyer is to provide ADOT employees and contractors, working on roadside projects, with basic knowledge to reduce the risk of incidental take of Western Burrowing Owls.*

### Legal Status:

Western Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*) are protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. All migratory birds and their parts are fully protected. They are also protected under Arizona State Law in Title 17-101, Title 17-235, and Title 17-236.

### What to look for:

- Description– small, ground-dwelling owl.
- Length– 19.5-25.0 cm (7.68-9.85 inches)
- Wingspan– 58.42 cm (23.0 inches)
- Mass– about 150 grams
- Males are typically slightly larger than females.
- Round head, lacks ear tufts.
- Distinct oval facial ruff, framed by a broad, puffy white eyebrow.
- Eyes contain a bright yellow iris.

### Where are owls found?

- Dry, open, short grass, treeless plains.
- Dependent on fossorial mammals. (ground squirrels, prairie dogs, badgers, etc.) to construct burrows.
- Human dominated landscapes: golf courses, airports, agricultural fields.

### Identifying an active burrow:

- Owls use burrows constructed by ground squirrels, badgers, coyotes and tortoises. They can also use pipes, culverts, and ditches.
- Presence of excrement (whitewash) near entrance to burrow.
- Burrowing owls frequently decorate entrance of burrows with cow or horse manure, feathers, vegetation and trash items.

### How to avoid them:

- Scan ahead prior to arriving at a sign location.
- If burrowing owls are observed within the project area, stop and move at least 100 feet beyond the owl or occupied burrow before resuming work.

*If you think your work may potentially impact a Burrowing Owl or active burrow, please stop. Move at least 100 feet from the animal or burrow before resuming work.*

*If you have any questions or think you have a borrowing owl or active burrow on your work site please contact: the project biologist or Coby Teal, Biology Team Lead  
cell: (928) 304-0487 email: cteal@azdot.gov*

*Source: Arizona Game and Fish Department Animal Abstract: Western Burrowing Owl. Heritage Data Management System*

*(revised April 24, 2024)*