



Presented by the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC

Editors: Dawn Brodie, Lauren Meads and Nadine Gomm

## Special Interest Articles:

- Spring Release.
- Fun Facts.
- Bird Banding course.

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## Spring Release 2009

The annual Spring event saw 109 captive-bred owls released at 7 private ranches and 1 public area. Our newest site was on the Shannon Ranch, where last fall many volunteers helped dig burrows. Over the summer, Dawn Brodie and Lauren Meads fought the heat and drought to monitor

survival and breeding success of these young captive-bred birds in the wild.

Dave Low released owls at Lac Du Bois and he monitored three successful nests with the help of Mary-Anne Unruh (who went out every Sunday for 3 months).

In the Kamloops/Merritt release area, 36 nests

produced successfully 213 juveniles, which were banded over the month of July.



Landowner Heather Shannon Releasing Owls onto our new site

## Pilot and Rocky: Our Newest Stars



Rocky (Female) & Pilot (Male)

BOCS welcomes “Rocky” and “Pilot” to our outreach and education program. Pilot was a LOTH from Return Parents at Guichon and Rocky was a LOTH from the Houghton Site.

What is a LOTH?  
A LOTH is the ‘last one to hatch’ in a clutch. Meaning that its siblings can be 2-3xs as large and out compete for food with the

youngest. Usually the LOTH will perish. 12 LOTHs were raised and fostered out to other nests. A study on growth rates and food intake was done with these LOTHS. A paper will be completed on these procedures for the fall.




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*"Pilot has become our new star at 3 months old where he has appeared at 6 presentations."*

## Newest Field Researcher

Lauren Meads joined the Burrowing Owl Society in 2008 as a volunteer at the Port Kells site. As of April 2009 she has been working with Dawn Brodie in the field.

She has worked with many animals, ranging from exotic cats, cranes, primates, and developing the captive breeding for the Northern Spotted Owl.

She has a degree in Biology from SFU and a Masters Degree in Applied Animal Behaviour and Welfare from the University of Edinburgh.

## Outreach Activities

The Society was busy as ever this year, spreading the good word about Burrowing Owl conservation. Pilot has become our new star at 3 months old where he has appeared at 6 presentations:

- 1) An elementary class on the Houghton ranch
- 2) Valley View Bible Church, where 7 to 11 year olds learned all about Burrowing Owls
- 3) Private birthday party at Guichon ranch
- 4) Presentation to home

school children

5) Brought to the Vancouver Avian Research Center in Vancouver.

6) The Knutsford Fall Fair

Earlier this year, Dawn Brodie and Mary Anne Unruh set up a booth at Merritt's "Tribute to Ranching" days. The Society also held its first "Open House" event at Knutsford last fall.

The BC Wildlife Park also has an active education program that includes Burrowing Owls. Their recent educational events and conference participation includes the Mayor's Environmental Expo, Lower Nicola Indian Band Species at Risk conference, and the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (IAATE) conference. The park welcomes a new Burrowing Owl Mascot to their team.

## New Field Truck

The society was able to purchase Big Red from Dawn Brodie to be used in the field. So far this season the truck has clocked over 10,000km



## Fun Facts

### Serious amount of eggs

- Usually burrowing owls lay 6-10 eggs but one nesting pair was a super-producer: 16 eggs! (Only 9 hatched).

### Beautiful ‘Bountiful’ Beresford Burrowing Owls

- At one site, we have two males that each paired with two females. That means one male is providing for two nest sites.

### Walking, more walking, even more walking...

- Our Field Monitors walk a lot in order to effectively monitor all the released owls. They clock about 30km each week, which equals over 500km for one season. That means serious weight loss!



16 eggs!

## New Aviary at Oliver

Expected to be completed fall 2009, thanks to the great volunteers supervised by Jim Wyse. A new release site will be dug at the El Kink Ranch outside of Ossoyos this fall.

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*“Aimee’s work has helped provide a tremendous amount of insight...”*

## The Science of Burrowing Owls

Aimee Mitchell’s report, “The Influence of Release Techniques on Survival, Productivity and Habitat Use of Captive-bred Burrowing Owls in British Columbia” can be found at:

[www.wptc.org/reports/2006%20WPC%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.wptc.org/reports/2006%20WPC%20Final%20Report.pdf)

Aimee’s work has helped provide a tremendous amount of insight regarding how survival rates of our captive-bred birds can be improved in the wild by using soft-release cages. These cages are kept on for two weeks.

## Articles on Burrowing Owls for 2009

Burrowing owls in the media:

- 1) The Western Producer
- 2) The BC Grasslands Magazine
- 3) Kamloops Daily News
- 4) The BC Magazine

## Bird Banding Course

At the end of August, six members of the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC participated in a bird banding course. This course was an intensive 3 day program presented by the Vancouver Avian Research Center (VARC).

Dawn Brodie, Mary-Anne Unruh, Mark Thane, Nadine Gomm, Cathy Hall-Patch and Lauren Meads all completed the bird banding course. Derek

and Carol Matthews taught a very excellent course which combined theory and practical skills. Half of the time was in the classroom learning about passerine birds, identification, molt patterns and techniques of banding. The other half was spent at a bird banding station, where students were able to apply their banding skills on a variety of small birds.

This course has also been taken by other members of the Burrowing Owl team. Lauren Meads said "This course was excellent and should be taken by anyone who wants to learn more about birds."

Check out their website and sign up for their courses at:

[www.birdvancouver.com](http://www.birdvancouver.com)



The Owl crew at a bird banding station

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*If you would like to contribute to the spring edition of the Pellet Post please email:  
lmeads@shaw.ca*

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## Blood testing to sex Burrowing Owls

The only way that we can tell the sex of the bird is through DNA analysis of their blood. This year blood testing was completed at Port Kells and BCWP. The results came in this fall.

At Port Kells the procedure was filmed while Dawn Brodie and Cathy Hall-

Patch (A Thompson-Rivers University Animal Health Technologist Teacher) took blood. This film will be used for future education purposes.

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*A Special Thank you to our Sponsors:*

- Burrowing Owl Winery – Jim Wyse
- HSP Gaming
- Canadian Wildlife Service of Alberta
- Private Donations

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.burrowingowlbc.org](http://www.burrowingowlbc.org)

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