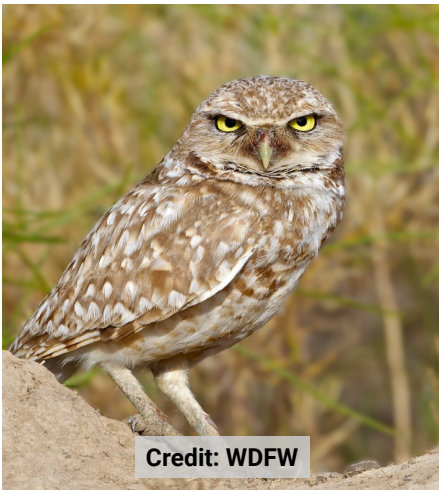




Searching for burrowing owls

A WDFW wildlife diversity grant project

The burrowing owl population is in decline in Washington due to habitat loss from agriculture, development, and catastrophic wildfire. There has never been a systematic inventory of burrowing owls within the 635,000 acres of potential burrowing owl habitat on the Yakama Nation Reservation. This project's three-month inventory will contribute to baseline population data for burrowing owls including burrow sites, breeding success, and population. Information collected can improve knowledge of the species' distribution and abundance, helping to inform recovery actions.



Credit: WDFW

Project name: Burrowing owl inventory on the Yakama Nation Reservation

Primary species benefitting: Burrowing owl

Grant total: \$27,428

Grantee & associated entity: Mark Nuetzmann, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

Webpage: ynwildlife.org

The burrowing owl is one of many native Washington species that relies on native shrubsteppe and grassland habitat. Most shrubsteppe habitat in Washington has been lost to agriculture, development, and catastrophic wildfire. The Yakama Reservation has some of the larger intact shrubsteppe lands in Washington's Columbia Plateau, yet burrowing owls have never been systematically surveyed there. Determining the extent of this species' population in Eastern Washington can better inform recovery actions and reduce the impacts of development and land conversion.



Credit: Mark Nuetzmann



Credit: WDFW

Project goals and outcomes

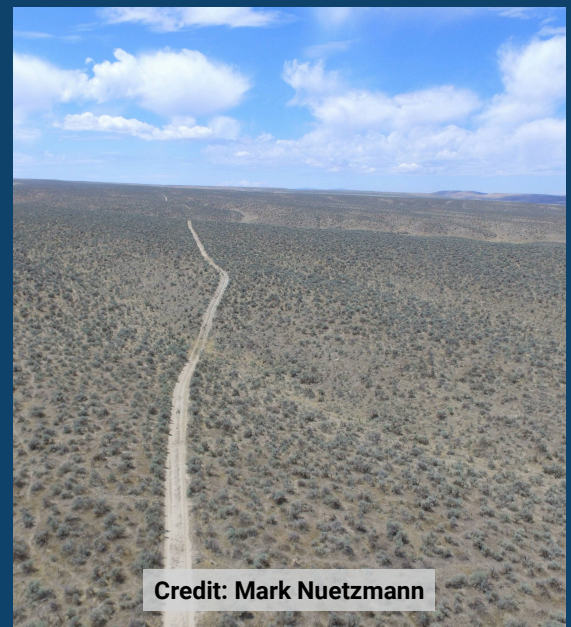
This project will inventory and map burrowing owl nesting locations in shrubsteppe habitat on the Yakama Reservation using three surveys during the nesting season: one each during pair formation, incubation/hatching, and the nestling period. Researchers will also install remote cameras where burrows have been located, when feasible, to determine nesting success and number of fledged nestlings.

At the conclusion of the project, survey and demographic information will be provided to WDFW. The project's intended outcome is to have a better understanding of the extent of the burrowing owl population on the Yakama Reservation to better inform biologists and land managers of potential impacts to the species from potential land use actions, and to make informed species recovery objectives.

Foundational knowledge for land management and recovery goals

Conserving Washington's remaining shrubsteppe and grassland habitat and the species that depend on it is a major priority for biologists and land managers in Washington. Shrubsteppe obligate species like the greater sage-grouse, Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, and ferruginous hawk are perilously close to extirpation in Washington. For these species, managers have a more accurate picture of their population trajectory, but for the burrowing owl, more research is needed to understand the species' population in Washington.

Inventorying burrowing owls on the Yakama Reservation will help determine whether the owls are present in existing available habitat. That foundational knowledge can help biologists and land managers in the region better determine land management and recovery goals for the burrowing owl.



Credit: Mark Nuetzmann

This project was funded by WDFW through the [Wildlife Diversity Grant Program](#).

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