

2015 Annual Report for Grant #20140030 (*The Burrow*)

Noelle Ronan & Chris Gregory

Imperial Valley Community Foundation (IVCF), Burrowing Owl Stewardship and Education Fund (BOSEF)

On 4 June 2014, Noelle Ronan and Chris Gregory entered into a contract with the IVCF to create an online resource for burrowing owl information and education. The funded project, originally named *The Burrow*, is being designed to allow a wider dissemination and understanding of burrowing owl information. We believe this project is important to help raise awareness for this unique animal, identify gaps in the current state of burrowing owl knowledge, provide a central location for information, and lead to additional and improved conservation actions.

As part of the grant application, we identified the following likely deliverables for the website: 1) previously published source material (journal articles, reports, or other literature), either in PDF form or as hyperlinks to licensed materials; 2) easily understandable summaries of this source material, arranged by ecological topic (*e.g.*, land characteristics, diet, movements); 3) 'white papers' which present up-to-date 'best' management advice (*e.g.*, burrow avoidance, artificial burrow installation); 4) educational materials suitable for use in elementary through university classrooms; and 5) online mapping of burrowing owl biological data. In a follow-up response to the IVCF board, we discussed the need for bilingual information and our desire to work with other BOSEF-funded organizations.

As part of the grant agreement (Terms and Conditions, item 'g'), we agreed to report in writing by 25 June 2015 (either as an interim or final report). This document serves as our 2015 interim report, will be mailed and emailed to Bobby Brock (IVCF) during the second week of June 2015, and contains a brief summary of our work to date and planned schedule for the rest of the year. We have streamlined or altered some of the preliminarily identified deliverables, while also expanded others. We expect the website to go live during the second half of 2015. If there are any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact either of us. Thank you for your support,

Noelle and Chris





Website Design/Creation

After several preliminary meetings and phone calls, we have contracted with the Conveyor Group (El Centro, CA) to create and design the web site, as well as to handle domain name acquisition(s). Due to the lack of domain availability, we may not continue with *The Burrow* as the name of the website. We have identified suitable alternatives that will be discussed with the Conveyor Group during our first post-contract meeting on 12 June 2015. At this meeting, further discussions on the content and look of the website will take place with web designers and graphic artists. We hope that the Conveyor Group will have one or more domains registered by the end of June 2015 and (at least) a skeleton website designed by the end of July 2015. We have also worked with outside graphic artists to generate potential logos and imagery (see examples above). We have paused this work until the website name and design has been finalized.

Content Creation/Design

We have conceptually grouped the content of the website into three main sections, identified below. Each of these sections are in various stages of completeness (*e.g.*, first draft dependent on completion of other materials, penultimate edit, completed). The main sections include:

Information & Resources – Collection of whitepapers, literature summaries, fact sheets, and general information. Current topics in development include: 1) Artificial Burrow Design, Site Selection, and Installation; 2) Burrowing Owls and the Imperial Valley; 3) Conservation and Management Actions; 4) Habitat Characteristics; 5) Identification Guide; 6) Impact Assessment; 7) Information Gaps / Research Needs; 8) Natural History; 9) Pesticides; 10) Regulatory Protections

Literature Database – Searchable database, containing links to each document. Where possible, electronic copies of each article/thesis/chapter will also be included. We hope to learn in June 2015 whether major academic publishers will allow us to include their copyrighted material on our website. We are targeting 500-1,500 items for the first iteration of the website (depending on launch date), with more added in the future.

Links – Collection of web links to and direct mirrors of major, 'off-site' burrowing owl and natural resource websites. Examples of linked/mirrored content include educational materials, media (*e.g.*, imagery, web cams), other BOSEF-funded content (*e.g.*, mapping of burrowing owl data by California Audubon), and other birding and regulatory websites. As we further develop the web site, we hope to transition from links to internal content.

Additionally, we are committed to providing the website in both English and Spanish (through a button toggle at the top of every page), as well as working with our fellow BOSEF grantees. We are employing a Spanish translation service, and improving the translations with individual community members (of various ages). We have also been in communication with the other BOSEF award winners (Glenna Barret and California Audubon). We have attended Glenna's educational workshop, are working with her to help set up and stream her burrow camera, and we will host Marie Barrett's educational materials. We have spoken with California Audubon and will insert their HTML code into our website to have a webpage dedicated to mapping the distribution of owls and burrows surveyed in the Imperial Valley.

Rollout

Our web content is designed to be dynamic and, hopefully, influenced by visitors to the website. In June 2015, a link to a web-based, bilingual survey about the website will be distributed to local residents, regional interest groups, and (non-)governmental organizations to solicit ideas about their burrowing owl information needs. Examples of organizations who will receive the link to the survey (and who will be encouraged to share the link with others) include: Bureau of Land Management, California Audubon, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Energy Commission, the Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner's office, the Imperial County Farm Bureau office, the Imperial County Office of Education, Imperial Irrigation District, IVCF board members, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Although we are developing content for the website, we plan to include additional topics which are identified by respondents to the survey. Previous and ongoing dissemination about the website includes visiting and talking with our network of contacts, as well as announcing the website at the recent Southern California burrowing owl conservation workshop held on 7 April 2015 in Palm Desert, California. We expect the full website to go live during the second half of 2015. As we get closer to that date, we will use our distribution list and press releases to coordinate the announcement of the launch date of the website.