



# Owls of San Mateo County



March 02, 2025  
Town of Woodside

Rick Morris  
of  
IntheWildwithRick



# Thank you!

- Chair Sue Sweeney Burow
  - Donna Howe
  - Melissa Cardinale
- All members of the Town of Woodside Environment and Open Space Committee
  - Everyone for being here

# Rick's Background

- West Menlo Park resident
- Former Tech worker
- Took time off to care for young kids during the pandemic
- Took up bird photography and opened an Etsy shop
- Photographer first then a Birder then an Owler
- Started organizing and leading Bird Tours in January 2024
- Stanford Professor contacted me for Owl Tour April 30th
- Just completed my 80th Owl Tour (along with 24 bird tours)
- Still learning a lot about birds and owls

# Western Bluebird - Male





Western Bluebirds - Stanford Dish, March 2024



# Western Bluebird - Stanford Hills, July 2024



# Western Bluebirds - Arizona Cactus Garden, May 2021



Western Bluebirds - Arizona Cactus Garden, May 2021



## Local SF Bay Area Owls

- Great Horned Owls
- American Barn Owls
- Western Screech Owls
- Burrowing Owls

Out of respect for the owls, I will not be providing any location information for the owls.

If you know the location of any of the owls I show, please keep to yourself

Great  
Horned Owl  
(GHO)

# Juvenile Great Horned Owls Branching - April 30, 2024 - 6-8 weeks old



'Mama' close by

# Juvenile Great Horned Owls - First Day Down From Nest - May 07, 2024



# Mom and Dad Great Horned Owls, Always Around - May 13, 2024



# Juvenile Great Horned Owl, Hummingbird and Moon - May 19, 2024



Juvenile Great Horned Owl - May 19, 2024 7:19pm (shooting into the sun)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl - May 19, 2024 7:25pm (sun behind me)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Family Pic - June 1, 2024 (approx. 3 months old)



# Juvenile Great Horned Owl - June 17, 2024



# Juvenile Great Horned Owl - June 17, 2024 (approx. 3.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl In Flight - July 04, 2024 (approx. 4.5 months old)



# Juvenile Great Horned Owl Checking me out - July 13, 2024



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Siblings - July 13, 2024 (approx 4 months old)



# Juvenile Great Horned Owl Trio - July 13, 2024



# Juvenile Great Horned Owl - July 20, 2024 (approx. 4.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl - August 15, 2024 (approx. 5.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl - September 09, 2024



Juvenile Great Horned Owl all grown up, last shot - September 22, 2024 (approx. 5.5 months old)



Great Horned  
Owl Pellet  
Regurgitation

# Great Horned Owl Facts

- The Hooters
- **Lifespan:** in the wild is around 20-30 years
- **Diet:** Mammals: Rodents (mice, voles, rats, squirrels), Rabbits, hares, Opossums.
  - Birds: Songbirds, waterfowl, Other owls, Hawks, falcons, and Crows, ravens.
  - Reptiles and Amphibians: snakes, lizards, frogs, toads, and salamanders.
  - Large insects (beetles, grasshoppers)
- **Predators:** Adults are rarely preyed upon but pesticides are killers.
  - Foxes, raccoons, crows, ravens and other raptors will prey on the eggs and juvenile owls.
- **Mating:** mate for life and perform hooting duets to strengthen their bond
- **Nesting:** use abandoned nests of squirrels, hawks, or crows, but can also nest on cliff ledges or in hollow trees
  - The incubation period for great horned owls is 30–37 days
  - The young owls leave the nest in 6–9 weeks after birth
  - Great horned owls usually lay 1–5 eggs per clutch, with an average of 2

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great\\_Horned\\_Owl/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Horned_Owl/sounds)

# Public Service Announcement

Please help protect our magical raptors

One of the top killers of raptors is the ingestion of rodent poison chemicals, also known as rodenticides.

Anticoagulant rodenticides (ARs) like brodifacoum, bromadiolone, and difethialone are rat poisons that can kill raptors.

Brand names poisons as d-Con, Hot Shot, Generation, Talon, and Havoc.

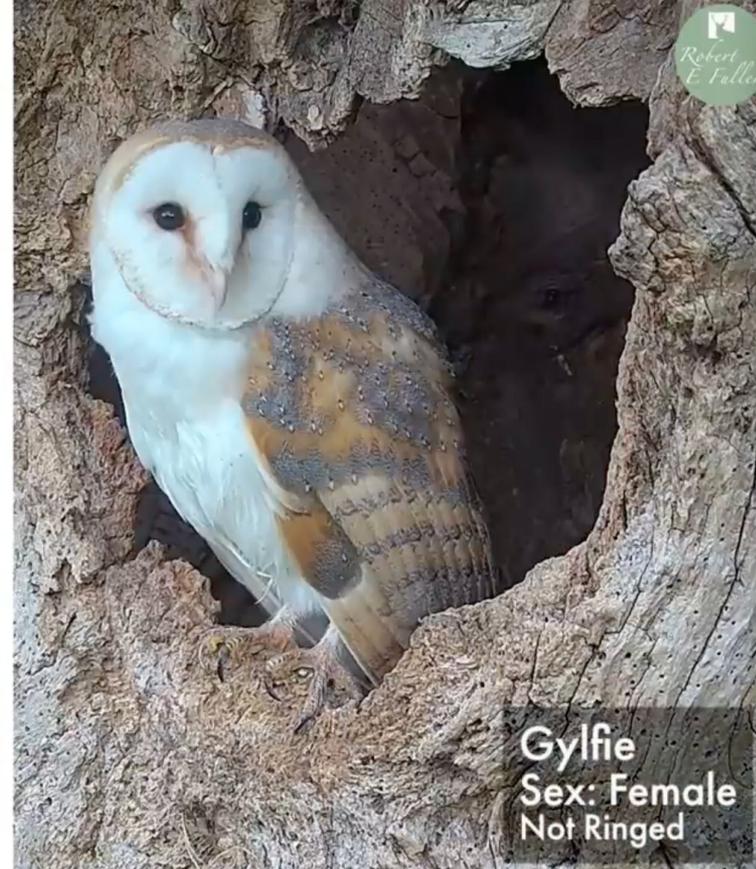
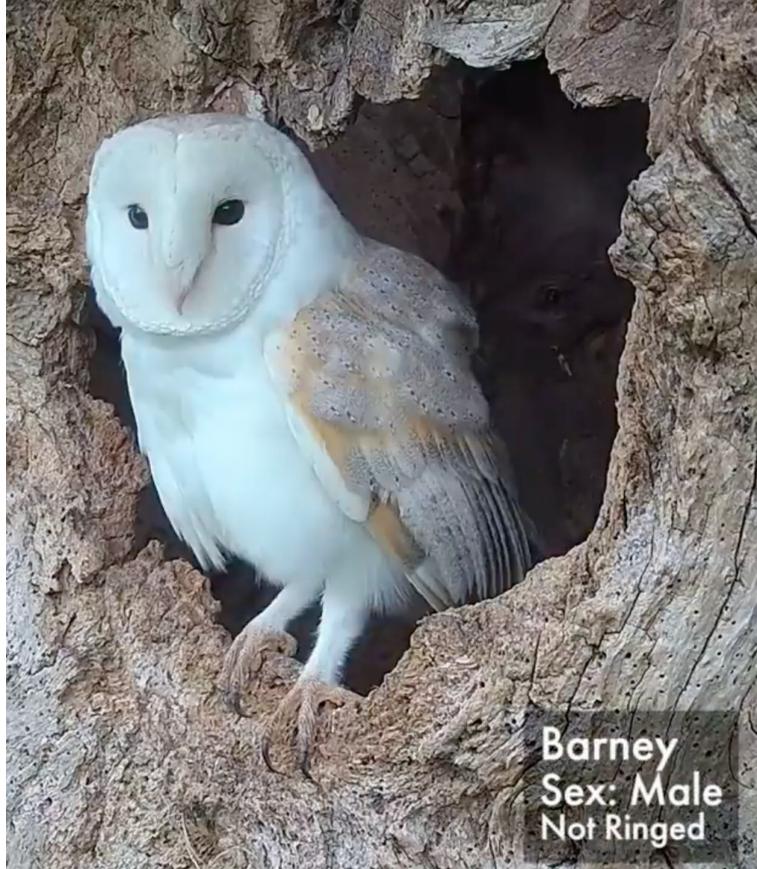
The safest way to get rid of mice and rats is through Humane trapping or the use snap traps placed strategically in areas where you've seen rodent activity, as they provide a quick and humane kill.

American  
Barn Owl  
(BANO)

# Barn Owl - Menlo Park - February 5, 2024



# Barn Owl - Male left vs. Female right - (pics by Robert Fuller)



Barn Owl - May 18, 2024



# Barn Owl - May 18, 2024



Barn Owl - May 18, 2024



# Barn Owl - June 2024



Barn Owl - July 9, 2024



# Barn Owl Outside of Resting Spot - August 2024



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# Barn Owl in a Palm Tree - February 2025



# Female Barn Owl - Coyote Hills



# Female Barn Owl - Coyote Hills



# American Barn Owl Facts

- **Lifespan:** On average 2-4 years but can live 15 years in wild, 25 in captivity
- **Diet:** Eat 4 mammals per night. Mostly rodents. Feeds heavily on voles; also takes various kinds of mice, small rats, young rabbits
- **Predators:** of the barn owl include large American opossums, raccoon, as well as eagles, larger hawks, and great horned owl
- Ears at different levels on the side of their heads
- **Mating:** Monogamous and mate for life
- **Nesting:**
  - lay eggs on top of pellets
  - 30-40 incubation period
  - first flight at 50 days old
  - male feeds mom and babies
- Females are more marked and colorful on wings and head
- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American\\_Barn\\_Owl/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Barn_Owl/sounds)

Western  
Screech  
Owl  
(WESO)

# Western Screech Owl - Menlo Park, October 2022



RICK W MORRIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Western Screech Owl - Menlo Park, November 2022



# Western Screech Owl - Menlo Park, May 2024



Western Screech Owl - Menlo Park, May 21, 2024 (ISO 25K, 1/25)



## Western Screech Owl 2 - Menlo Park, May 2023 Morning



# Western Screech Owl 3 - October 2024



Western Screech Owl 3 - October 2024 (ISO 25K, 1/60, f2.8)



Western Screech Owl 3 - December 22, 2024 (ISO 25K, 1/50, f2.8)



Western Screech Owl 4 - August 2024



# Western Screech Owl 4 Female and Male - February 2025



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# Western Screech Owl Facts

- **Lifespan:** Usually live from 1 to 8 years in the wild but the longest recorded lifespan is 13 years in the wild, in captivity, 19 years.
- **Diet:** Consume mostly small mammals and large insects.
  - Mammals - mice, voles, pocket gophers
  - Insects - beetles, moths, spiders, centipedes
  - Also eats small birds, lizards, snakes, frogs, fish.
- **Nesting:** in tree cavities, often in old woodpecker holes, and sometimes in nest boxes.
- **Mating:** monogamous and form pairs.
- **Predation:** Skunks, raccoons, crows, and jays.
- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Western\\_Screech-Owl/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Western_Screech-Owl/sounds)

Burrowing  
Owl  
(BUOW)

# Burrowing Owl - January 2025



Coyote - December 26, 2024





## Burrowing Owl - August 2024



Cooper's Hawk - January 17, 2025







## Burrowing Owl - November 2024



# Burrowing Owl - December 23, 2024



# Burrowing Owl Facts

- **Lifespan:** Live for 6 to 10 years in the wild
- **Diet** includes small birds, reptiles, rodents and large insects, including butterflies, moths, bees and wasps, ants, spiders, flies, slugs, snails and freshwater mussels, Grasshoppers and crickets
- **Predation:** badgers, coyotes, raptors, foxes, skunks, weasels, and snakes.
- **Other threats:** habitat destruction due to human activities, such as land development, pesticides.
- **Night Vision Eyesight:** Burrowing owls' large eyes make up about 5% of their body weight, allowing them to see in low-light conditions.
- **Neck Rotation:** These owls can rotate their heads 270°, compared to the 180° range of human necks.
- **Adaptive Nesting Habits:** In the absence of natural burrows, burrowing owls adapt by nesting in piles of PVC pipes and other human-made materials set up by conservationists
- **Higher tolerance for carbon dioxide:** adaptation for living in underground burrows where CO2 levels can be high.
- **Unique Nesting Behavior:** Before laying eggs, burrowing owls decorate their burrow entrances with animal dung to attract insects for food.
- **Dependence on Other Animals:** Burrowing owls cannot dig their own burrows and rely on

# Snowy Owl of Cypress - January 01, 2023





**Any Closing Questions?**

**Thank you!!!**

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