

Birds Activity #2

An at home, do-it yourself family activity for Ages 7-10 (can be modified for younger or older children). Provided by Gumbo Limbo education staff.

Purpose: To learn about one of Florida's native birds.

The Burrowing Owl:

The burrowing owl is a cute, fascinating type of bird that is important to people in South Florida but also has populations that live throughout the tropical and temperate grasslands of the Americas. Burrowing owls are different from other owls by not only living



underground, but being active during the day, this is called **diurnal**, the opposite of **nocturnal**. Like many native Floridian animals, the burrowing owls that live in South Florida make a feast of bugs, which is their primary source of food. That's great news for us since they help to keep bug populations down!

Appearance: Burrowing owls have bright yellow eyes, a white chin, and the rest of their body is brown with white spots. This top layer of patterned feathers, or **plumage**, allows them to be **camouflaged** or blended-in the colors of the environment. They are usually about 9 inches tall, or not much larger than a canned beverage, which makes this camouflage important so they can hide from larger birds and outdoor cats when on the surface, before going underground into their burrowed tunnel homes.

Habitat: One way the owls can get underground is by the help of another important burrowing species, the **Gopher Tortoise**. If you have visited Gumbo Limbo Nature

Center before, you probably saw our trio of gopher tortoises in their home nearby the Sea Turtle Rehab. The gopher tortoises dig tunnels to make a home for themselves, but sometimes they wake up to find roommates like frogs, snakes, mice, and even the Burrowing Owl! The burrowing owl is able to dig its own burrow, but sometimes a gopher tortoise burrow is easier!

Activity:

1) Find a shirt that is the same color as your bedsheets. You may need to borrow a shirt from an adult or sibling, but make sure you ask first.

2) Remove the top sheet from your bed, or if you have extra sheets that aren't on your bed already, pick a color you like!

3) Build a pillow-fort burrow. The more pillows deeper your burrow!

4) Cover the fort with your top sheet.

5) Nestle inside your burrow, knowing you are well camouflaged! (Invite a parent or sibling to be your home-providing gopher tortoise roommate)

6) Check out these Owl videos in the comfort of your new burrow!

- [A Rare Glimpse of the Burrowing Owl](#)
- [YouTube owls co-existing with humans in South Florida](#)
- [LIVE Webcam of Burrowing Owls](#) (most active morning and late afternoon)

7) Clean up after building your burrow, returning bed sheets and pillows. And remember the burrowing owl is diurnal!

Sources:

Image Credit: Friedel, Tom for birdphotos.com (2008). Burrowing Owl, Florida subspecies, near burrow in scrub/sand setting . This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License. Retrieved from: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9f/Burrowing_Owl_Florida.jpg

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